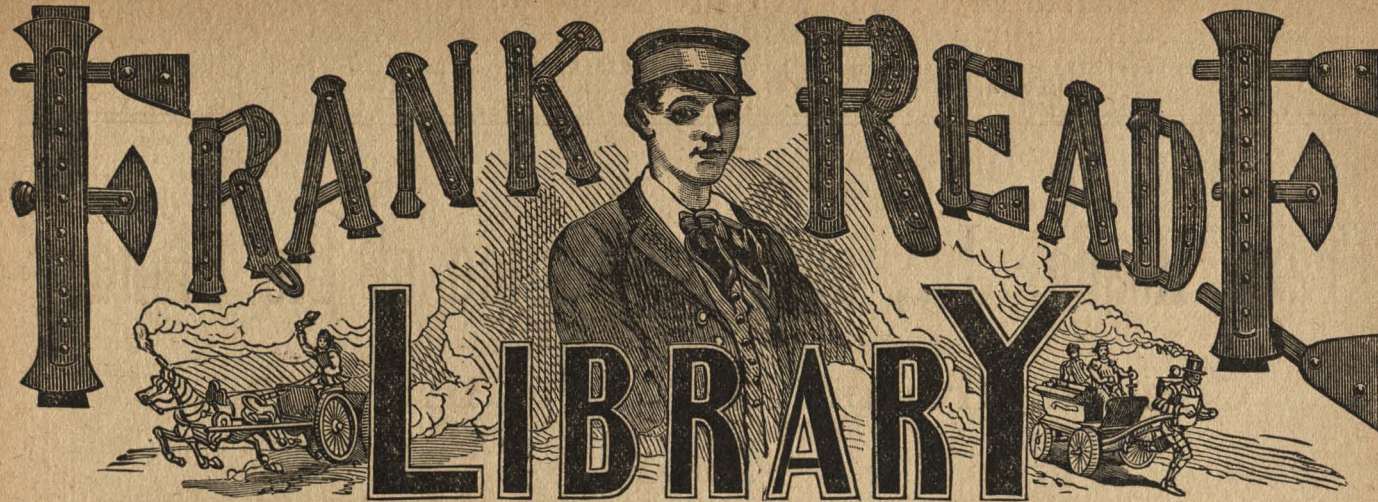


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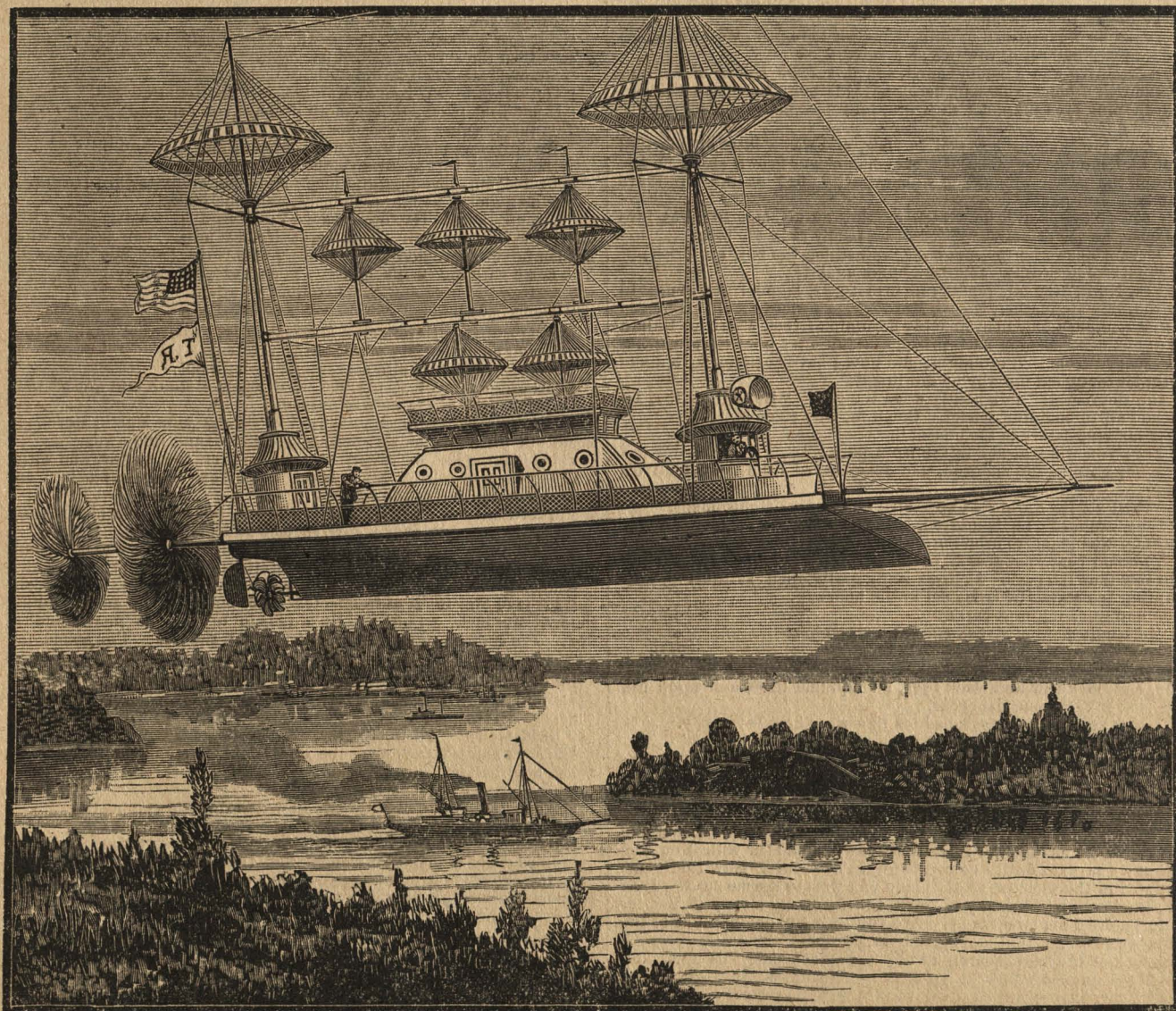
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Frank Reade, Jr.,

And His Engine of the Clouds; or,
Chased Around the World in the Sky.

By "NONAME."



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Frank Reade, Jr., and His Engine of the Clouds:

OR, Chased Around the World in the Sky.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His Air Ship in Asia," "Frank Reade, Jr., in the Far West," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

SHOT FOR MONEY.

It was a bitterly cold night in March.

The bleak, gloomy streets of Chicago were almost deserted.

A poor little boy in rags was slinking along an aristocratic avenue, shivering with the cold, and looking very wretched.

His pallid, emaciated face showed poverty and privation, an air of utter misery surrounded him, and he had a mournful look in his sunken eyes.

Nobody noticed poor Joe Crosby, but the police.

He was then only one of the many waifs of the great city.

Tom Reynard, the detective, had seen him stealing along like a thief, and the zealous officer became so suspicious of the boy's actions that he began to follow him.

Perhaps he was justified in doing this, for the hoodlums of Chicago were a pretty bad set of rowdies as a rule.

The detective was a middle aged, sharp, shrewd fellow, of medium size, clad in a black suit and derby hat, his bony face clean shaven, his keen blue eyes snapping with fire, and his reputation for ability the very finest.

He kept the skulking boy well in view, and was a little bit startled to see him mount the stoop of a very handsome brown stone house, through the parlor windows of which, partly open at the top, there gleamed a dull light.

Instead of the poor little wretch making an attempt to break into the house, as the detective expected, he boldly rang the bell.

A servant answered the summons, and seeing the boy, she cried:

"What! Joe Crosby—you back home again?"

"Yes, Nora," the boy replied, in firm tones, "and I am going to stay too. My step-father, Martin Murdock, is a wicked man. He lured me to a wretched tenement in West Randolph street, where an Italian villain has been keeping me a prisoner. But after a month of captivity I escaped from there to-night, and now I have come back to make Martin Murdock tell me why he did this."

"Oh, the rascal!" indignantly cried the girl. "He told us that he sent you off to boarding-school. Come in, Joe, come in."

"Is my step-father in the house?"

"Yes; you will find him in the front parlor."

The boy entered the mansion, and disappeared from the detective's view.

Reynard vented a whistle expressive of intense astonishment.

"Holy smoke!" he muttered. "Here's a daisy game! Never thought I was going to drop onto a family affair of this kind. Wonder if I could hear what goes on in the parlor if I get up on the stoop?"

He saw that the parlor windows were partly open at the top, and mounting the stairs, he crouched in the doorway.

Joe had gone into the parlor.

A well-built man, in stylish clothing, stood in the room.

It was Martin Murdock.

He was apparently about forty years of age, and wore a black mustache, had dark hair and black eyes, an aquiline nose, and upon his left cheek a V-shaped, livid scar.

A cry of astonishment escaped his lips when he saw the boy.

"Free!" he gasped. "How did you get away, you whelp?"

"That is my business," the boy replied angrily. "You must explain why you had me imprisoned in that vile den."

"Oh, I must, eh?" sneered the man, with a nasty leer.

"I have thought it over," said Joe, sharply. "You was a poor man when you married my mother. When she died, I know that she left me a large fortune, for I heard the lawyer read her will. You was made my guardian until I come of age, in five years. Now there was one point in the will that would make you wish to see me dead. That was the clause which said you would inherit all my money if I were to die before I am twenty-one. Are you trying to put me out of the way so you can get that money, Martin Murdock?"

He looked the man squarely in the eyes as he asked this question.

Murdock quailed before his victim's reproachful burning glance for Joe had correctly surmised the dark plot he had in view.

His nervousness only lasted a moment for he quickly recovered.

"Fool!" he hissed, getting enraged at the thought that his wicked scheme was suspected. "How dare you hint that I'd do such a thing?"

"Because I know you are a villain."

"What!" roared Murdock furiously. "You insult me. I'll pound the life out of you, you infernal young scoundrel!"

And he sprang at the boy and dealt him a savage blow that knocked him over upon the floor, rushed up to him and began to kick him about the head.

Weak from past privations, and unable to defend himself, poor Joe groaned in a heart-rending manner, and cried piteously as the hot tears ran down his pale, thin cheeks:

"Oh, don't—don't, Mr. Murdock!"

"I'll kill you!" yelled the brute.

"For pity's sake! Oh, the pain! Stop—I can't stand it!"

Just then the servant rushed in.

"Shame!" she cried indignantly.

"Get out of here!" roared Murdock. "I'll discharge you!"

"If you beat poor Joe any more I'll have you arrested!"

This threat caused the broker to say hastily:

"He provoked me to it. I don't intend to hit him again."

Satisfied with this assurance, the girl went out.

Poor Joe, cut, bleeding and black-and-blue, crept toward the door.

The man glared at him a moment, and then hissed:

"Get up, there! Get up, I say! I'll have a final settlement with you! Put on your hat. It is eight o'clock now. The lawyer who has charge of your money has gone home. He lives out of town. You come with me to his house. You'll get your money. Then you can clear out of here and never trouble me again."

"Gladly!" exclaimed Joe, in eager tones.

He knew that with plenty of money he could easily get along in the world, and be under no obligations to this fiend.

Murdock scowled at him and prepared to go out.

Hearing them coming, the detective left the stoop and got behind an adjacent tree where he was unseen.

He had scarcely concealed himself when he saw Martin Murdock come out with Joe, hail a passing cab, get in and ride away.

The detective had overheard all they said in the parlor, and with his suspicions of the broker aroused, he pursued the cab, resolved to see the termination of the affair.

Murdock did not utter a word to the boy, but kept watching him, and deeply thinking over a dark scheme he had in view.

The boy feared this man, but he was so eager to have a final settlement with him, that he did not hesitate to go with him.

Reaching the railroad depot, they embarked on a train.

"I'll take him to an unfrequented place and put an end to him," thought Murdock, grimly. "He stands in my way to nearly a million. The stakes are enormous. It is worth the risk. I'm bound to have the money."

Unluckily for him, the detective was on the same train.

They were whirled away.

Several hours passed by when the end of the road was reached.

"Readstown! All out! Last stop!" called the conductor.

Murdock and the boy were the only ones in that car, and they arose, alighted and strode away.

Tom Reynard pursued them.

The place was a noted little city in which dwelt a celebrated young inventor named Frank Reade, Jr.

Skirting the suburbs of the city, Murdock led his victim toward a magnificent big mansion in which dwelt the inventor alluded to.

In the extensive grounds surrounding the house were a number of immense workshops, in which the inventor constructed his marvelous contrivances.

"There's where the lawyer lives," Murdock said to the boy, as he pointed at the mansion, although he had never been in Readstown before.

This information allayed any suspicions the poor boy might have

had, and as the surroundings were isolated, the place seemed to favor the murderous design the man had in view.

They strode toward the mansion and paused at the gate.

"You wait here for me," said Murdock. "I'll go in and see if the lawyer is home. I'll call you in if I find him."

"All right," the boy replied, in low, sad tones.

He leaned against the gate post with an oppressive feeling at heart and the gloomiest forebodings in his mind.

It almost seemed as if he had a subtle premonition of his fate.

Murdock entered the grounds and stole away in the shrubbery.

He came to a pause and listened intently, then keenly peered around without hearing or seeing anybody.

The wretch was intensely excited and as pale as death, while upon his brow there stood great beads of perspiration.

He fully realized what he was going to do.

There was not an extenuating thing to excuse him.

From where he crouched he could plainly see the boy.

He drew a revolver from his hip-pocket, his hand shaking as if palsied, and deliberately aimed at the poor boy.

Bang!

"Oh, God, I'm shot!" shrieked Joe.

Murdock rushed to his victim.

Poor little Joe fell to the ground.

The assassin thrust the pistol in his stiffening fingers.

He designed to lend the crime an appearance of suicide.

But Tom Reynard had seen the whole deed, and came rushing up to the villain and his victim, too late to stop the crime or be of any service.

"You murderer!" cried the detective.

"I'm caught!" hoarsely muttered Murdock.

He struck the detective with the pistol, knocked him senseless, and hearing footsteps approaching he rushed away.

Down from the house rushed Frank Reade, Jr., alarmed by the pistol shot, and seeing the detective was stunned he knelt down beside the boy.

Poor Joe was dead to all appearances.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENGINE OF THE CLOUDS.

FRANK READE, JR., was a dashing young man of distinguished appearance, attired in fashionable clothing.

He was noted for his wonderful skill at inventing electrical and mechanical wonders of various kinds.

In this work he was ably assisted by a diminutive negro, named Pomp, and a rollicking, red-headed Irishman, called Barney O'Shea, who invariably were his traveling companions on the trips he made with his inventions.

Judging that the boy was beyond all recovery, and deeming it wisest to pay first attention to the living, Frank lifted the detective up and carried him into the house.

He met the coon and the Celt running toward him.

"Gorramighty!" panted Pomp, "Wha' de trouble, Marse Frank?"

"I found this senseless man and a dead boy at the gate just now!"

"Be heavens, it's a bloody murder, then?" exclaimed Barney.

"So it seems. Help me in with this fellow till we revive him."

They carried Reynard into the sitting-room, laid him down, and seeing his badge, discovered that he was a detective.

Restoratives were applied and he began to revive, upon observing which Frank went out to get the dead boy.

When he reached the gate, to his amazement, he found that the body of little Joe Crosby had mysteriously disappeared.

Frank hunted all over, but failed to find it.

Completely at a loss to account for the mysterious disappearance, he returned to the house and told his friends about it.

Reynard had recovered.

Sitting on the sofa, he heard that the body was gone.

Then he told Frank and his friends what had occurred.

As soon as they heard the story they realized that a brutal crime had been perpetrated by an avaricious, unscrupulous rascal, who ought to be punished for his sin.

"I'd better apprise the local authorities of the deed and the strange loss of the body," said Frank, briskly. "In the meantime, Mr. Reynard, you had better try to find Martin Murdock."

"Holy smoke! Here's a daisy game!" the detective replied. "Your head's level, Mr. Reade. I'm off. You'll hear from me again!"

And away he went.

Frank followed him out.

He went to inform the police.

It was then nearly eleven o'clock.

Barney and Pomp had been in the work-shop putting the finishing touches on a new flying machine Frank invented.

Everything was completed, but in their hurried exit they had left the electric arc-lights lit in the shop.

When the inventor was gone, the Irishman said to Pomp:

"D'yer moind yer wor ather lavin' ther lights lit in ther shop?"

"Me?" said the coon. "G'way! T'warn't me, honey. Yo' done it."

"Go an' turrin thim out, nagur."

"Won't do nuffin' ob de kine."

"Naither will I, me jewel."

"When Marse Frank come back, he gwine ter git mad."

"Shure you're a dead man then, fer I'll blame it on you."

"An' I'se gwine ter say dat yo' done did it, chile."

"Ther two av us will get it in ther neck then."

"Dunno 'bout dat, I'ish," said Pomp. "If I'se got ter go, yo' go, too!"

And so saying, he suddenly grabbed Barney by the nape of his neck, and the slack of his pants, and rushed him into the yard.

Away they scudded across the garden toward the shops, the Irishman unable to stop himself, and Pomp grinning and chuckling over the advantage he had gained.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, as his legs flew along. "Begorry, I'll have yer sclap for this, ye pucker-up hyaena!"

"Cl'ar de track!" roared the delighted coon. "Heah come de cyclone! Golly, what a roast, Barney!"

Propelling the Celt before him, he reached the half closed door of the shop, slammed Barney against it with a bang, causing it to fly open, and barked his nose on the panel.

"Murder!" raved the Celt. "Faix me bugle is bushted!"

"Put on de brakes!" howled the coon.

Then he hauled off with his big foot and gave Barney a boost that landed him on his ear in the middle of the big room.

Unluckily for the dusky practical joker he tripped over a plank and landed on top of the Irishman with a thud.

The next moment Barney had him by the leg, dragged him over to a tackle hanging from the wall, secured the hook around the coon's ankle, and hoisted him up by the rope.

When Pomp's woolly head cleared the ground Barney tied the rope to a cleat, and picked up a barrel stave.

"Watch me droive him troo ther wall!" he roared.

It was now his turn to chuckle and laugh.

Pomp began to look sick.

Around swished the stave over the coon's coat-tail.

Whang!

Bang!

Plunk!

Thump!

For reports like pistol shots pealed out, as Barney brought the stave down upon the coon's anatomy.

A bellow ripped from between Pomp's thick, blubbery lips.

"Fo' de Lawd sake, stop dat!" he yelled frantically.

"Yer will ploog me wid yer fut, hey?" roared Barney.

Then he soaked the coon again.

Whack!

Crack!

Biff!

Boom!

Pomp squirmed, roared, and suddenly grabbed his tormentor.

"Unfasten me dar!" he howled, as he pinched the Irishman. "If yo' doan done it I'se gwine ter chaw yer, honey."

"Holt on!" yelled Barney in tones of agony. "Bad cess to yer, it's a choonk yez will take out av me entirely. Lave af, yer bottle-nosed gorilla, or I'll go around on a crotch!"

"No, sor! No, sor! Not'll yo' luf me down yere."

"Yis! Yis!" howled Barney, complying. "Ouch, me leg! Whoo—oh—oh!"

The moment Barney let go the rope, he tore himself free and rushed out of the shop, pursued by the coon.

In the middle of the big room stood Frank's new invention.

It was formed like a sharp prowed ship, and was made of aluminum.

There was an air-rudder at the bow and a water screw and rudder at the stern, while the deck was railed in.

From the bow projected a long ram, while at the stern were two enormous air-propellers, one larger than the other.

Two turrets crowned the deck, with tubes rising from their roofs, on top of which were a pair of tremendous helices.

From one tube to the other ran two more horizontal tubes, between which were ranged five more big helices.

These helices were revolved, as were the other wheels, by a strong current of electricity, to lift the engine up in the air.

In the forward turret, which was designed for the steersman, stood a powerful electric search-light, and in the midship section a circular deck house pierced by doors and bull's-eyes.

It was a remarkable looking machine, the material and mechanism of which combined extreme lightness with the greatest of strength.

As Frank had built other flying machines with mechanical parts similar to those employed in this one, which had proven successful, he was sure this one would operate.

The young inventor had returned from police headquarters when Pomp chased Barney out into the yard, and going between the practical jokers, he separated them.

Both were forced to shake hands and go to bed, and the inventor turned out the lights and followed them.

On the following day Frank received reports from the police from time to time, but nothing was found of the missing body of poor little Joe Crosby.

Toward nightfall Tom Reynard returned to Readestown.

He made his way at once to Frank's house, and meeting the celebrated inventor in his library, he asked him:

"Well—have you found the corpse?"

"No. The police have hunted all over but failed."

"How strange. Suppose someone stole it—probably medical students, who want it for dissection. I've got bad news."

"What is it?" asked Frank, curiously.

"Learned that Martin Murdock returned to Chicago last night."

To-day he drew a small fortune in money from his bank, went to New York and started for Europe in the transatlantic steamer Red Star."

"So he escaped you, eh?"

"Yes. He knows that his crime is exposed, and wants to escape. arrest. He's got plenty money to do it too. But I've telegraphed on to Liverpool to the police to hold him on a charge of murder. I've got a warrant to arrest him on that charge and am going after him."

"He may suspect your design, and give you the slip."

"Yes, I know. Such a daisy game has been played before. But it's the best I can do," said the detective.

"I know a surer way than that to catch him."

"How? How?" eagerly asked Reynard.

"Chase him in my new flying machine. Heard of it?"

"Yes. The papers mentioned that you had such an invention."

"My interest in the case is excited. Do you want to do it?"

"I'd be delighted, if you'll allow me to."

"Oh, I want a use to put the engine of the clouds to, and as this is a good one, I'll see if I can't aid the ends of justice with the machine."

"Good! When shall we start?"

"The day after to-morrow. As we can make one hundred miles an hour through the sky in her, we are bound to soon overhaul the steamer. We have only to provision and equip the engine now."

The four set to work at once on the air-ship.

By the second day she was ready, and they all embarked.

Frank entered the forward turret, the machinery was started, the helices whirled, and the engine arose, and passed through the open roof of the ship and shot up into the sky.

CHAPTER III.

A STOWAWAY.

The sun was going down in the west when the Pegasus, as the engine of the clouds was named, rose above Readestown.

Her seven big helices were whirling around with a loud, buzzing sound, and lifting her at the rate of a yard a second.

A shout arose from the people thronging the streets when they observed the flight of the engine, and as the news spread, every one in the city watched the ascension with deep interest.

Barney and Pomp had gone into the deck-house, and hastened below to watch the working of the machinery.

Left alone on deck, the detective observed that the Pegasus rode as steadily as if she rested on flanges upon the ground.

At a height of 2,000 feet Frank slackened the speed of the helices until they whirled just fast enough to hold the engine at the desired altitude.

The detective then joined him in the turret.

"Holy smoke! This is a daisy contrivance!" he exclaimed.

"She works just as I designed she should," replied Frank.

"What are you going to do now?"

"Drive her out over the Atlantic."

"In the teeth of this gale?"

"Certainly."

There were several levers in front of the steering wheel beside the compass binnacle, and Frank pulled one of them.

Like the rest this lever was connected with the machinery, and it made an electrical circuit with the driving screw motor, causing them to rotate.

The screws acted upon the air as a metal propeller does in the water, and the engine glided ahead.

Frank glanced at several dials on the wall.

They registered, measured and gauged the different parts of the air-ship, while various other instruments kept the temperature, gave the altitude, velocity of the wind, and so on.

"This is marvelous!" the detective cried, enthusiastically.

"You can feel her advance against the wind," said Frank, "but when we are going with it at the rate of one hundred miles an hour you would scarcely think we were moving."

"How can you go with the wind?"

"Why the atmospheric envelope of the earth consists of numerous stratas, or air currents that blow in all directions," replied Frank.

"If I were in a balloon, and had no means of guidance but plenty ballast and lots of gas I could steer it as well as if I had a rudder. This could be done by alternately raising or lowering the balloon into currents of air blowing in the directions I wished to pursue."

"Ain't that queer?"

"It is perfectly natural. Now there is a strata called the Solar Current which blows constantly from the west to the east at a very high altitude. I could send a balloon completely around the world by remaining poised in that current. As it is so high up, however, we cannot make use of it, for we would be at such a great elevation we could not see the Steamer Red Star if we met it."

Just then Barney came in.

"How is the machinery?" Frank asked him.

"Faix, it do be wurkin' as shlick as a phwistle," replied the Celt, "an' I suspishey that she'll be afther gallopin' troo ther clouds beyant wid the agility av a kangaroo."

"Take charge of the wheel, and hold her due east. I'll run down below and observe the actions of her dynamo and machinery myself."

He beckoned the detective to follow him.

Leaving Barney steering, they went out on deck.

The panorama of the landscape below looked like an enormous oil painting.

Everything took on the most diminutive size, and in the far distance they caught sight of the great lakes.

The intense solitude was occasionally broken by the shrill blasts of steam whistles in factories and locomotives, the clang of bells, and other loud, distinct sounds.

A few high flying birds were seen circling around not far away, and a strong wind was vainly opposing the engine.

Passing into the deck house, Frank and the detective found themselves in a room used for a cabin!

On one side stood a row of bunks, and at the other a staircase leading down below.

A door in the partition gave access to a combined kitchen and dining-saloon over which Pomp presided as cook.

Every room was fitted up with incandescent electric lamps and pony motor fan-wheels, while the furnishing was luxurious.

Descending the stairs, they found themselves in the hold.

It was divided into three compartments.

The one forward was a general store-room for tools, arms, ammunition, duplicate parts of the engine and similar things; the next room contained food and water enough for a long trip, and the rear compartment held the machinery.

It was a simple arrangement.

The base of each helix shaft was furnished with a powerful motor which only required an electric current to turn it.

This current was derived from a small, light dynamo which in turn was operated by an oil engine.

The same engine and dynamo gave power to the electric lighting machine, and a large motor connected with the machinery which revolved the screw shaft.

Should the occasion require, the power could be turned into a small motor, to which the water screw was coupled, for work in the sea, if they desired to navigate the water.

Pomp was busy oiling the bearings when Frank and his companion entered the engine room.

"Barney says everything is satisfactory, Pomp," said Frank.

"Spec's it am, sah," grinned the cook. "She done buck de win?"

"Like a battering ram. I'll examine her."

"Fo' shuah, honey."

The inventor began his inspection.

He had not looked far before he received a tremendous shock of surprise.

Crouching in a corner behind a barrel of oil, he caught sight of a man, who, by some means had stowed himself away on the engine.

"By thunder, a stowaway!" he cried.

"Holy smoke!" gasped Reynard. "Here's a daisy game!"

"Fo' de Lawd sake, whar am he?" demanded Pomp in startled tones.

Frank pounced upon the man, caught him by the back of the neck, and hauled him out of his covert.

A cry of alarm escaped the fellow upon finding himself discovered, and he rose to his feet with a scared look.

He was a man of about thirty, attired in a seedy suit of clothes, a dilapidated stove pipe hat, and wore a brown beard and mustache.

"Oh!" he roared, struggling to break away from Frank. "Don't touch me. I'm crazy! Look out! I bite! Ha, ha! See the demons. The air is full of them! Back, you imps, back I say!"

He put up his fists, and began to punch wind.

A cynical smile crossed Frank's face.

"So you're looney, eh?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Completely off my base," asserted the man, confidentially.

"You lie! You are simply pretending to be a crank in order to avoid punishment."

"That's a daisy game!" laughed the detective.

"Oh, but you're mistaken," said the man, in injured tones. "I just escaped from the asylum. I'm a dead bug; on the level, I am."

"What induced you to enter my shop and stow yourself away aboard of this air-ship—a desire to navigate the clouds?"

"No," replied the stranger. "You carried me up before I could get off again. I—hey! Give me that—"

"What is this book?" queried Frank, hauling it out of the man's pocket, and glancing at the pages.

The man strove to snatch it away, but Frank was too quick for him, and prevented it.

One glance at the contents was enough for him—the book was filled with drawings of the mechanism of the air-ship.

"He's a thief!" cried Frank, flushing with indignation. "He has simply come aboard to steal my patents. Here is the proof!"

He held up the book to the view of his companions.

The man slunk back with a scowl of alarm on his face, for he realized that his real motive was betrayed, and that all the contradictions he could make would be of no avail in the face of such damaging evidence.

For a moment a deep silence ensued.

"Holy snake!" ejaculated the detective. "That's a daisy game!"

"Frow de dirty white trash overboard!" indignantly roared Pomp. Frank tore the book to pieces, and flung the fragments out one of the windows, after which he turned to the man, and said:

"Your treachery shall be severely punished, sir."

"But I'm a maniac!" protested the fellow, in a vain attempt to convince them that he was not accountable for his actions. "I'm covered with snakes! Take 'em off! Don't you see 'em squirming?"

Frank caught him by the neck, interrupting him.

"That will do!" he cried, angrily. "Insane people don't usually

do such very practical and profitable things as you have done. Consider yourself my prisoner, sir."

"I'll be hanged if I will!"

"You can't escape from here."

"I can't, eh? Well, I'll own the engine."

As he said this a desperate light leaped into his eyes, and he pulled a knife from his breast pocket.

Making a rush at Frank, he aimed a stab at him, which the young inventor barely had time to avoid by stepping back.

Pomp picked up an iron bar, and the detective drew his revolver and aimed it at the man.

Seeing the peril he was in, the rascal rushed for the stairs, pursued by the three, and dashed up to the cabin.

Out on deck he ran like a deer.

Frank and his companions followed him.

He headed for the pilot house, and flinging open the door, he dashed into the room behind Barney.

CHAPTER IV.

A LIGHT FROM THE SKY.

BARNEY heard the man rush into the room, and glancing around, he was thunderstruck to see the stranger.

Moreover, his amazement was increased by observing that the man had a wild, hunted look on his face and a knife in his hand.

"Be Heavens, it's a stranger!" he gasped.

"If you budge an inch, I'll run this knife in your heart!" hissed the man.

"Faix, I'll not boodge a quarther av an inch," replied Barney.

"Tell your friends to keep back, or you are a dead man!"

"Shtand back as far as ther sturrun, fellies!" roared Barney.

"Ther further back yez goes, ther safer me loife will be!"

Frank and his companions heard this cry.

It brought them to a pause, for they realized that Barney was in danger.

A consultation was held to devise a means of getting the man into their power and saving Barney.

"See here," said the stranger to the Irishman.

"I'm luckin', yer honor," replied the Celt.

"Lower the engine to the ground so I can alight."

"I will; only kape that knife away. Begorry, it makes a cowlid chill floy up an' down me backbone whin ther p'int tooches me."

And Barney slackened the revolutions of the helices.

The engine began to rapidly descend.

In a short time she was near the ground.

"Now tell your friends to enter the cabin."

"Masther Frank, dear!" roared Barney.

"What do you want?"

"Go beyant intil ther cabin, d'yer moind?"

"What for?"

"This spalpeen do be wishin' to escape wid no bullets in him!"

"Is your life in danger, Barney?"

"Faix, I'm widin wan inch av bein' a coorpse!"

"Then we'll go in."

"Go, an' God bless yer sowl!"

Frank and his companions returned to the cabin.

Peering out the door, the stowaway saw that the coast was clear.

"If you attempt to turn your head before I am off this engine," said he in threatening tones, "I'll cut your heart out!"

"Faith I have a shuff neck, an' couldn't turrin it if I tried," lied Barney.

The man shook his knife at Barney, and glided out on deck, for by this time the machine was within a few feet of the open ground.

No sooner was he out of the room, when as quick as a flash Barney turned a heavy current of electricity into the boat's hull.

"She's electrified!" he yelled to his friends.

They heard and understood him, and remained in the cabin out of danger.

Not so the stranger.

His shoes insulated his feet.

But no sooner did he grasp the railing to go overboard, when he received a powerful shock that made him yell.

Both hands grasped the railing convulsively, and he could not let go.

"Oh! Ouch! Oh-h-h-h!" he yelled, wildly.

"Bedad, I have him!" roared Barney, delightedly.

"Stop it!" screamed the stranger. "I'm a dead man! I'm a dead man!"

"Faith, I'll take yer measure fer a coffin," chuckled Barney.

"Let up there, will you? Oh, oh, oh!"

"Divil a bit! It's electrocuted I'll have yez in wan minute!"

The man raved, swore, begged and wept.

Barney kept the current on though.

Finally Frank cried:

"That will do. He's punished enough."

"I'll let him go then," returned the Irishman.

He cut out the current.

As soon as the stowaway found himself relieved, he gave a jump, flew over the rail, and landing on the ground below he rolled over and over in the dust.

Getting upon his feet he sped away.

Frank and the rest then emerged from the cabin, and Barney sent the machine up in the air again.

She resumed her journey, and the man below was soon lost to view in a woods.

"Fer ther love av Hiven what do it all be manin'?" asked the Celt.

"He was a stowaway stealing my patent," Frank replied.

"Troth an' it wuz a blackguard he made av himself entoirely."

"He didn't gain anything by his rascality."

"How hoigh up shall I be afther sindin' the Pegasus?"

"One thousand feet will do."

"It's that same now."

"Then drive her ahead!"

Barney complied, and by nightfall they reached the ocean.

A watch was maintained for the steamer Red Star all night, and the engine of the clouds mounted higher to avoid a rain storm, and sped along on the course of European bound vessels.

Several craft were seen during the night.

But none was the steamer they sought.

On the following morning Pomp cooked a dainty breakfast for them and all hands went out on deck.

They were then over 500 miles from land.

Below them stretched an endless expanse of water, while above the sky was clear and blue.

Pomp had assumed control of the wheel, and the engine floated half a mile above the sea.

She was making eighty miles an hour, and going with a strong breeze from the southwest.

The detective was an inveterate smoker, and having lit a fragrant cigar, was puffing away at it.

"How far are we from the steamer?" he asked Frank.

"From three to four hundred miles," the inventor replied.

"And how long will it take to gain that distance?"

"About ten hours."

"Then you think we will meet the Red Star to-day?"

"Very likely by six o'clock to-night."

"She will be nearly half way across the ocean——"

"No—not more than quarter the distance."

This news seemed to please the detective very much.

"We are bound to catch Martin Murdock before he reaches the other side, it seems!" he remarked.

"Provided no accident occurs to prevent it. How strange that poor little Joe Crosby's body disappeared."

"I have an opinion about that."

"What is it?"

"Murdock was probably lurking near the spot where the boy fell shot. When you took me into the house he probably returned, carried the corpse away and hid it in order to conceal the evidence of his crime."

"That's a reasonable supposition. But how did you secure the warrant for the man's arrest?"

"By swearing that I saw him murder the boy."

"Did you witness the deed?"

"Yes; I stood only fifty feet away."

"Then we will have no trouble to take him."

Just then Barney came out and joined them.

He carried an old fiddle upon which he was used to playing, and struck up a lively reel.

Pomp had a banjo in the pilot house.

Hearing the scraping of the violin, he fastened the wheel, and picking up the instrument, he began to play a rattling accompaniment to the Irishman's tune.

"Be ther hokey this is foine!" chuckled Barney, with a grin.

"Bress de lamb!" roared Pomp in the turret. "Saw away dar, honey, saw away! I'se a-plunkin', I is, an' dar am gwine fo' ter be music in de air if dis yere coon knows heself."

"Bedad, it's out av tune yez are entoirely!" cried the Celt.

"G'way, chile; dis ole pianner am all right. Yo' bettah go learn how ter scrape dat dar ole caliope befo' yo' done try ter play tunes."

"Watch me rattle ther spalpeen," grinned Barney.

He suddenly changed the reel into a slow hymn, and no sooner did the coon change his accompaniment when the Celt switched off into a waltz.

Before Pomp could fairly get started into different keys and different tunes, off went Barney into still different tunes.

It made Frank and Reynard laugh at the coon, and they heard him swear, and twang and thump away wildly.

At times the air and accompaniment harmonized and were timed alike, when suddenly Barney would flip from fast to slow time, leaving the coon thumping away furiously.

Then, when the ducky played slowly, off went the fiddle at a tremendous rate leaving him far behind.

It finally got the moke so wild that he quit playing.

The day passed by uneventfully and night fell.

Tom Reynard had learned how to manage the Pegasus and stood at the wheel steering about eight o'clock, when suddenly he descried several twinkling lights ahead.

"Vessel ahead!" he shouted out the door.

"What do you make her out to be?" cried Frank, running in.

"Holy smoke, how can I make out in this gloom?"

"I'll direct the search-light upon her."

It was very dark down below, but through the gloom Frank plainly saw the twinkling lights on the moving vessel.

He turned the search-light by means of a lever, so that it was directed toward the vessel.

Then he switched on the electric current.

A broad shaft of light suddenly swept down upon the vessel, lighting her up as if by a big beam of sunlight.

It was a steamship.

A yell of surprise arose from her crew.

They were alarmed and amazed at the brilliant dazzling glow suddenly shooting down upon them from the sky, and the most marvelous ideas of its origin entered their minds.

Frank leveled a glass at the craft.

"It is the Red Star!" he exclaimed. "I see the name on her bow."

"Hurrah!" yelled the detective, delightedly. "Now we'll get Murdock!" and down swooped the air engine toward the speeding steamer.

CHAPTER V.

FOUND AND LOST.

"STEAMER ahoy!" shouted Frank.

"Ahoy! What's that?" was the reply.

"This? An air-ship."

"By thunder, I thought it was a comet!"

"I wish to board you."

"Shall we haul to?"

"No. Hold this ladder."

Frank dropped a rope ladder down.

Two sailors seized it, and held it rigid.

Barney had the wheel, and kept the Pegasus over the steamer.

The detective and Frank descended the ladder to the deck.

Here they were met by the captain, the watch on deck and many of the cabin passengers.

"This is an amazing call," said the captain.

"We are here on business, sir," replied Frank.

"That is very strange."

"Not at all. We have come from Readestown."

"What! Can it be possible! What for?"

"To make a prisoner of one of your passengers."

"I am more and more astonished."

"The man is a murderer!"

A murmur of surprise ran from lip to lip at this remark.

When the captain recovered from the shock he asked:

"What is the man's name?"

"Martin Murdock."

"Whom did he murder?"

"His stepson, a boy named Joe Crosby."

"Why was the crime committed?"

"So Murdock could inherit the boy's fortune."

"Purser, have we a man of that name aboard?"

"No sir," the pursuer replied in positive tones.

"Perhaps he has taken a fictitious name," hinted Reynard.

"True. He has ample reason to," admitted the captain. "Try to describe him. We might recognize him that way."

"He is forty, very dark, has a black mustache, and a vivid V-shaped scar on his left cheek," said the detective.

"Why, that's Mr. Blank, who occupies state-room No. 22."

"Produce him, and we will try to identify him."

"Certainly, if you have a warrant for his arrest."

"Here it is," said the detective, exhibiting the paper.

The purser went off in search of Mr. Blank.

In ten minutes he returned empty handed.

The individual in question had vanished.

Every one now started off in search of him, and he was finally discovered hiding in one of the coal-bunkers below.

He presented a very dirty and ruffled appearance when they hauled him up on deck, struggling and swearing furiously.

As soon as the detective saw him, he cried:

"That's the man!"

"Sure" asked the captain.

"I'd swear to it, sir."

"Take him—he ain't wanted here."

"Thank you, sir. Now then, Murdock——"

The rascal recognized the officer, and saw the handcuffs Tom had drawn from his pocket.

He shuddered at the sight of them.

"Spare me!" he gasped.

"No, sir! You are my prisoner."

"Don't put those things on me!"

"Will you submit peacefully?"

"Yes—yes! I'll do anything you order."

"Climb up that ladder to the air-ship."

"Very well," said Murdock, and up he went.

Frank and Reynard followed him, and the ship sped on.

Pomp received the prisoner, and stood holding him.

"Wha' yo' gwine ter do wif him, sah?" he asked Frank.

"Lock him up in the storeroom down-stairs. He can't very well escape with the Pegasus up in the clouds."

"Fo' shuah, sah," assented the coon.

"Take him down, Pomp."

"Yessah," and off the darky marched the prisoner.

"Our work is almost done now, Reynard."

"I'm glad we succeeded so easily."

"Hey, Barney!"

"Yis, sor!"

"Turn the Pegasus around and steer for home."

"Bead, it's the great man-hunters we bees," said the Irishman. The air-ship mounted the clouds, and retraced her course.

Every one was jubilant over their success.

They discussed the capture until bed time and finally turned in. Frank and Barney remained on duty.

About ten o'clock the inventor suddenly said:

"I'm going down to have a talk with the prisoner."

"Faix it's bad company you'll be kapin', sor."

"I wish to learn the facts about Joe Crosby."

"Ther facts, is it?"

"Yes—what Murdock did with his victim's body."

"Shure, an' he'll not tell yer."

"I'll try him anyhow."

Frank passed down below as he said this and made his way to the store room.

He found the door broken open.

Going in he saw that the prisoner was not there.

Very much startled Frank searched all over for the man, but soon discovered that he was not aboard the Pegasus.

A long drag-rope hung down from the side.

Its end almost trailed in the sea, as the engine of the clouds had been lowered to within a few hundred feet of the ocean to get her out of a dense cloud bank.

One of the four life-preservers was gone.

It was clear that Martin Murdock had broken from the room, took a life preserver, went up on deck unseen, lowered the drag rope and slid down to the sea.

It was, he calculated, safer to trust himself to the mercy of the ocean than remain aboard the Pegasus, be carried back to Chicago, and have to answer to a charge of murder.

Seeing how matters stood, Frank returned to Barney, and explained what had happened.

"Beheavens, he's as slippery as an eel!" groaned the Celt.

"Stop the engine, and retrace your course."

"Is it a sarch fer him yez would have me make?"

"By all means. Drop her down near the sea."

"May the aould Nick floy away wid ther spalpeen."

"By an effective use of the search-light we may find him."

"You kape watch, Masther Frank."

Barney lowered the engine and flashed the light down on the sea, the surface of which he swept with it!

Armed with a powerful glass Frank scanned the water everywhere the light struck.

Although they searched and searched everywhere until it was time to arouse the others to relieve them, they failed to find any trace of the missing man.

When Pomp and Reynard were aroused and told what transpired, they were wild with vexation.

"Golly!" cried the coon, "I done lock him in de sto'-room, sah, an' rebbur tink ob sich a ting as dot he gwine fo' ter git out. Bress my soul, if I know dat he git away, I'd aslep' befo' de do' wif one eye open dehall night."

"We've had all our trouble in vain," sighed the detective, dolefully.

"Holy smoke, he's a daisy!"

Just then Frank caught sight of a white object floating in the water and he leveled the glass at it.

"A life preserver!" he muttered. "And bless me if it isn't the very one Murdock stole from the store-room. It's got the name Pegasus upon it. Lower the ship, Pomp!"

The darky obeyed.

She soon reached the surface of the sea.

Frank took a boat-hook and hoisted up the life-preserver.

A hunt was made about the vicinity for the man, but they did not find him.

It occurred to them that he was drowned.

A ship was descried in the distance just then!

"He may have been picked up by that vessel," Frank suggested.

"Let's run up to her and see."

The coon steered for the ship.

When they arrived within a short distance of her, they saw by the search-light that she was plunging into a fog bank, and Frank viewed her with his glass.

He gave a violent start a moment later.

"The ship May-Queen, of Liverpool," he read on her stern, "and, by heavens, there's Murdock standing on her deck surrounded by sailors watching us."

"Good!" cried the detective. "Follow her, Pomp."

"Yas, sah," the coon replied.

He grasped the lever to increase the speed of the engine, when a report pealed from the deck of the boat, and a shot from her signal gun roared out.

It struck the forward tube of the rotascope frame, there sounded a crash as the upright broke, and the next moment the helices all stopped, as the electric wire that gave current to them was severed.

Down into the sea plunged the Pegasus.

A cry of alarm escaped her crew when they felt her falling, and the next moment the ship dissolved from view into the thick fog bank.

Down rushed the Pegasus like a meteor.

She struck the sea with a violent thud.

A shower of brine flew up over her, and the next moment she disappeared from view under the water.

The ship thus escaped, bearing Murdock away.

CHAPTER VI.

FOILED AGAIN.

THE Pegasus rose to the surface at once and floated like any ship, but she had taken in considerable water, and was badly crippled.

Frank heard a mocking laugh come from amid the fog in the voice of Martin Murdock, as the ship receded.

It filled the inventor with wrath.

"You may escape now!" he shouted, "but I'll catch you if I have to chase you around the world, Martin Murdock!"

"Fool! You can never catch me!" came the reply.

The voice was so indistinct that Frank realized how useless it would be to protract a conversation.

"Man the pump, Barney!" he cried.

"Yis, sor," replied the Celt.

"Pomp, help me to clear the wreckage."

"Fo' de Lawd! am de hull ting busted?"

"I think we may be able to repair it."

They went up on the turret, and, assisted by Reynard, they took down the broken parts, while Barney was busy pumping out the water the engine shipped.

It was impossible to do anything in the gloom.

As the vessel floated buoyantly, they put her water-screw in motion to give her steerage-way, and started off.

She proceeded so slowly in the water, though, that they had no hope of overtaking the ship.

Besides, the fog was so dense they could not see it.

Finally Barney and Frank turned in.

The sea was calm enough and the wind moderate, so they passed a quiet night and met with no accidents.

On the following morning they set to work to repair the damage, and were kept busy all day and far into the succeeding night.

As there were plenty tools and materials on board, they finally succeeded in repairing the damage.

The work was so well done that it would have been very difficult to tell that the machine was broken.

"We can ascend now," said Frank. "But whether we will overtake that ship or not is an open question."

"She was heading eastward, wasn't she?" questioned Reynard.

"Very likely bound for Liverpool, as she came from there."

"What could have induced her crew to shoot at us?"

"Murdock probably incited them to do it."

"Be ther hokey, he's a vilyun!" growled Barney.

"Send her up," said Frank.

Pulling the helix-lever, the Celt caused them to revolve, and the engine rose from the sea, dripping water, and mounted the air.

Frank carefully watched the spinning wheels.

He could not see any defect in their action, and soon felt confident that they would continue to operate properly.

Up, up the Pegasus soared like a bird on the wing until she reached the lowest strata of clouds.

When she plunged into them the sea was obscured.

She rose above them presently, and paused.

Here a glorious scene was observed.

The silvery moonlight streamed down unobstructed upon the sea of clouds beneath the air-ship.

They had a billowy appearance, their constant movement lending them a strange aspect as the lights and shadows changed from moment to moment.

A soft, dark, velvety gloom filled the vault of Heaven which was only broken by the vivid points of light emanating from the stars that studded the firmament.

It was a silent region.

The air was very rare and exhilarating.

Having stopped the ascent, Barney started the huge driving wheels revolving, and drove the Pegasus ahead.

She looked like silver as the moonlight slanted upon her white metal hull, and to any one on the ocean must have presented a strange ghostly look with her electric lamps glowing and her search-light blazing out far ahead.

All night long she swept along through the dizzy height, and in the morning her dazzling lights went out.

Not a sail was in view below.

Frank was discouraged.

He thought they would overtake the May Queen.

"You ought not feel down-hearted over it," said the detective, consolingly, although he felt disgusted himself. "She may have changed her course, so that we might have passed her."

"Suppose we head for Liverpool. We can find out all about her there, and wait for her to come in."

"That's a very sensible plan."

A rattling sound overhead reached Frank's ear at this moment, and he glanced up at the big stern-helix.

A bolt at the top of the post had worked itself loose.

In a few moments it might fly off and injure the wheel.

He hastened below, procured a long-handled wrench, and went up the frame to tighten the bolt.

Getting on top of the upper longitudinal girder, he reached over the revolving helix and began to tighten the bolt with the long-handled wrench alluded to.

Scarcely had this been done, when the rim of the helix caught his jacket as he carelessly leaned too close to it.

The wheel was making rapid revolutions with enormous power, and the next moment tore Frank from his foothold.

Held by the jacket, he was whirled around and around furiously by the big wheel.

A cry of consternation escaped him.

At any moment he was liable to be hurled off into space.

His cry was taken up by the rest when they saw the peril of his position.

If the helices were stopped to let him down, the entire ship would fall like a stone into the sea.

Frank grasped the braces to sustain himself.

He was getting frightfully dizzy from the swift gyrations.

The Pegasus was then floating at a height of 3,000 feet.

As soon as Barney observed what happened, he immediately slackened the speed of the helices.

The flying machine began to descend swiftly.

Slower and slower whirled the wheels, until the engine of the clouds was falling at the rate of 500 feet a minute.

Frank's brain was in a whirl.

It seemed every instant as if he would lose his senses.

Such a thing would be fatal.

Although the wheel was going much slower, its velocity was yet simply frightful.

It made the inventor sick at his stomach and sent the blood flying through his veins like fire.

His sight failed him and a roaring noise sounded in his ears, his body became cold and numb, and he could scarcely breathe.

Suddenly his fingers relaxed.

He was hurled far out from the wheel.

His body shot through the air like a cannon ball.

In a moment more he struck the water and sank.

Fortunately he was close to the water, and the sudden shock of sinking revived his faculties again.

He sank, and then rose to the surface.

At first he only knew enough to swim, but as his senses gradually returned, he finally realized his surroundings.

Glancing around, he saw the Pegasus.

She had settled into the water close by, and the screw having been put in motion, she glided toward him.

Pomp flung him a rope.

"Catch dat!" he cried.

"Heave away!" cheerily answered Frank.

"Am yo' orright, honey?"

"Yes. Only a little dizzy."

In a moment more he was on the deck.

His coat was torn where the rim of the helix caught it, and he was drenched, but that was all.

While his friends raised the engine in the air, he went inside again, put on dry clothing, and took a drink of brandy.

The Pegasus reached the coast of Ireland and went over to Liverpool where she alighted on the suburbs.

Her descent drew a large crowd of people to the spot but they finally landed her in a private garden at the offer of the owner, where she was kept secluded.

Frank then went to the city.

Here, by dint of inquiry, he learned that the May Queen was coming into the harbor at that moment.

Delighted to hear this, Frank hired a tug and went out to meet the ship.

Going aboard of her, he asked the captain sternly:

"Where's the man you picked up at sea?"

"Martin Murdock? We met a French steamer and he left us to go aboard of her. She was bound for Havre."

"Foiled again!" cried Frank in disgust.

"What did you want of him?"

"He is a murderer."

"Good Lord! Is that so?"

"Why did you fire at the air-ship?"

"It frightened us. We did not know what it was until too late. Then we were so scared we fled."

"Did Murdock pay you for your help?"

"Yes, very handsomely, too; but had we known that he was a fugitive from the law, we would have imprisoned him."

Frank then returned to the tug.

The boat was sent flying back to the city.

Here he made haste to get back to the Pegasus.

Telling his friends what happened, he added:

"Up in the air with her! We must go to Havre after him. Quick, boys, quick!"

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED FROM DEATH.

THE air-ship soared up to the clouds and sped away over Great Britain toward the English Channel.

A tremendous shout arose from the populace who had seen her ascent, and hearing the shouting, Frank thought it was a token of their approval of the engine's work.

He strode to the rail and doffed his cap.

Again the shout pealed out.

Frank looked perplexed.

It did not sound like a cheer.

Then he heard a faint cry below.

"Help! Help!" was the scream.

It sounded like the voice of a boy, and the inventor glanced down, when, to his amazement, he observed a lad of about fifteen hanging to the drag rope by his hands.

He had been among the spectators.

As the rope swept by he thought it would be great fun to seize it,

and let the air-ship lift him up a short distance when he calculated to let go and drop to the ground again.

Unfortunately the aerostat lifted him up so high before he could carry out the latter part of his resolve, that he found he would very likely kill himself if he relaxed his grip on the rope.*

Frank realized at a glance what had occurred.

"Hello there!" he shouted down at the youngster.

"Save me!" screamed the boy, in terrified tones.

"Don't let go!"

"I can't hold on long. My strength is going!"

"Heavens!" muttered Frank, in startled tones.

He knew that only the quickest kind of work would prevent the little fellow from perishing.

It was his peril that caused the crowd to shout.

"Help, Barney!" he shouted.

Glancing at the end of the drag rope, he saw that it was securely fastened to a ring bolt in the deck.

Without losing another moment he grasped the rope, swung himself off the deck, and rapidly slid down to the boy.

"Hurry—hurry!" the little fellow was groaning.

"Hang on a moment more!" shouted Frank.

Along he slid, so fast that the rope burned the palms of his hands, until he reached the youngster.

Then he reached down and seized him by the collar.

No sooner had he done so, when the poor boy's strength suddenly gave out, and he let go the rope.

His hands fell to his side.

Frank bore all his weight with one hand, for with the other he was obliged to sustain himself.

He was very powerful.

Still the strain on his muscles was immense.

Barney had heard his cry, and rushing to the side he looked over and saw how the situation stood.

"Brace up!" cried Frank.

"Oh, I'm so dizzy!" groaned the frightened boy.

"You'll get over it in a moment."

"I'll fall—I know I shall!"

"No, you won't. I've got you fast."

The boy groaned, for he was in a panic.

The strain on Frank's arm began to tell on him, for the rope was swaying like the pendulum of a clock in the wind.

He was so accustomed to great heights that it did not affect him in the least.

But the inexperienced boy felt awful.

"Masther Frank!" yelled Barney. "What'll I do?"

"Lower the engine as fast as you can!"

Barney rushed to the turret to comply, and a moment later they were flying earthward at an alarming rate.

The boy cried and gasped for breath, and Frank tightened his fingers on his collar and clung to the rope.

Their combined weight at such a great distance from the deck of the Pegasus was so great that it would have been a difficult task for Reynard, Barney and Pomp to haul them up.

Down they shot toward the woods.

It was clear that they would plunge into it.

"Look out now!" shouted Frank in warning tones.

"I have me oye on the threes," returned Barney.

"We must leave him here."

"In a three?"

"Yes."

"I'll grade her."

In a minute more they reached the topmost branches.

Frank watched for a favorable opportunity.

"Can you get home from here?" he asked the boy.

"Yes—yes—anywhere!" panted the little fellow.

"I'll have to leave you in a tree."

"I can get to the ground."

"Here's the one."

The Pegasus had drifted to a tall tree with thick upper branches against which they struck.

As the boy grasped a branch Frank let him go.

He clung safely to the branch a moment, and then quickly made his way down to the ground.

Ultimately he got home in safety.

Frank sighed with relief and straightened up.

Winding the rope around one leg, he rested himself and then went up hand over hand until he reached the deck.

Here his three companions met him with:

"How in thunder did it happen?"

"Whar de kid come from, honey?"

"Be heavens, it wor dead I thought yez waz."

In a few words Frank detailed the circumstance and they returned to the pilot-house.

Here Reynard resumed the management of the wheel.

The engine returned to the clouds and they finally reached the English channel and crossed over to Havre.

Here a descent was made.

Then a thought flashed across Frank's mind that brought a cry of bitter disappointment from his lips.

"Why, what's the trouble?" asked Reynard, in surprise.

*The author, when a boy, experienced this adventure with one of Prof. Donaldson's balloons.

"In my haste I forgot to ask the captain of the ship the name of the steamer Murdock went on."

"Holy smoke! That's a daisy mistake!"

"Now we'll have trouble, I'm afraid."

"Very likely. All that will save us will be inquiries."

They brought the engine to the ground in the country.

It was long after midnight.

Nothing could then be done, so they turned in.

On the following morning Frank proceeded to the city.

He was a good linguist and made inquiries at the Custom house about the incoming steamers.

Three were expected that day, he learned, and none had come in the day previous.

It was therefore very fair to presume that the fugitive was on one of the several that were expected.

His next move was to apprise the prefect of police that there was an American murderer on board of one of the vessels expected, and ask his aid to secure the man.

The request was granted.

Officers armed with warrants and a description of the man were posted to wait for Murdock with Frank.

The entire day thus passed away.

In the morning one of the vessels came in, and in the afternoon another, but Murdock was not on either of them.

It was late in the night when the third ship made the port, and feeling sure that his man was aboard, Frank and the officers went out and boarded her.

A search was made among the passengers, but he was not found among them.

Frank then spoke to the captain, asking him:

"Did you take a man from a ship off the British coast?"

"Yes, sir," replied the captain. "He was an American."

"Where is he now?"

"Left the vessel."

"What?"

"Yes. He paid to be set ashore at Cherbourg."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"Not a word."

Frank returned to his friends and told them the news.

It was very exasperating, but the detective said:

"Let's cross the bay of the Seine, and inquire about him. We may get on his trail yet."

This plan was carried out.

In a short time afterwards the aerostat landed near the city, and Frank left her again.

He soon came hastening back, his face aglow with pleasure, and cried, as he got aboard:

"I've discovered what became of him."

"Where is he?" eagerly asked the detective.

"On the rail. He purchased a compartment on a train which will carry him to Marseilles, in the south of France."

"Good! Has he been gone long?"

"Five hours ahead of us."

"It would be hard to tell which train it is if we met it."

"Very true, but I know when it is due at its destination to-morrow, and we have only to go ahead, and as we can easily pass him, we will get there ahead of the cars. When the train arrives, we'll be waiting for him."

"He may trick us again."

"Perhaps. But he don't know we are after him, and therefore will not look for us," said Frank.

The Pegasus was started off again.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAFFLED AGAIN AND AGAIN.

THE engine of the clouds reached Marseilles five hours ahead of the train on which Martin Murdock was riding.

Frank knew what time the cars were due.

In Cherbourg he had met a Custom House inspector who saw the man land from the steamer, and purchase his railroad ticket for the south of France.

The Pegasus was landed late in the afternoon, and the young inventor went to the railroad depot.

When the train came in, he saw Murdock alight.

Coming up behind the man and clapping a hand on his shoulder, Frank exclaimed:

"Martin Murdock, you are my prisoner."

"Blast it, the inventor!" gasped the man, in startled tones.

He turned around, glared at Frank a moment and then clapped his hand to his hip-pocket to draw a revolver.

The inventor was as quick as he was.

In a moment they were aiming at each other.

A shout of alarm escaped the people around, and they scattered in all directions, fearful of being shot.

A deep silence ensued.

Then Frank said:

"You must submit!"

"Never!" determinedly replied Murdock.

"I am bound to take you."

"Not while I can resist, sir."

Without the least warning Murdock fired.

The bullet grazed Frank's head, and he staggered. Murdock dashed out into the street and ran away.

Recovering himself, Frank rushed after him, but the villain jumped into a carriage and was whirled away.

The vehicle went toward the water front.

Frank ran along after it, holding a handkerchief to his head where a wound had been inflicted.

The carriage soon distanced him.

He afterwards met it coming back, and hailed the driver.

"Does monsieur wish to ride?"

"Yes. Here is a five dollar piece."

"Monsieur is very generous."

"You can have it if you carry me to where you just took the man."

"Certainly. Step into the carriage."

Frank did so, and was whirled away.

The driver took him to a pier.

Here he paused, and as Frank alighted, he said:

"Monsieur, here is where I carried my last fare."

"Where did he go?"

"He boarded a North German Lloyd steamer which was just getting ready to put out to sea, bound for Alexandria."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

Frank was fairly stunned.

It was marvelous how the fugitive escaped him.

He was certainly the slipperiest customer Frank ever met.

It seemed as if he were pursued by the most extraordinary good luck in all his ventures to escape.

Telling the driver to take him back to where he had left the Pegasus, the inventor asked if he knew the name of the steamer, and the cabman replied:

"It was the Khedive."

He then drove Frank away.

Rejoining his companions, Frank told them the news.

It made them wild.

But the detective said consolingly:

"If he's on that steamer we'll soon overtake him. He can't dodge us there as he could on land."

"True," assented Frank. "Let us follow him."

He was just about to go aboard when a number of gend'armes came running up to him.

Frank was surrounded.

"You are my prisoner, sir!" said one of them.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"You was dueling with a man at the railroad depot."

"No, no! He was a criminal whom I strove to capture."

"I care not what he was; you are under arrest."

Frank was intensely annoyed.

But it could not be helped.

So he had to submit.

He tried to explain to the prefect, but that dignitary was a very crabbed old martinet, and locked him up.

Frank was kept inurance vile for several days, and his friends had to produce proof by telegraph from Havre that the chief of police there sanctioned Frank's work.

The inventor was then reluctantly released from custody.

His friends bore him off in triumph.

They lost no time getting aboard the Pegasus, and sending her up into the air after that.

As she sped away over the beautiful blue sea, Frank said:

"It seems as if fate were against us. We have lost three days. It will be impossible to reach Alexandria in time to beat the steamer. I'm afraid Murdock has got the best of us."

"Holy smoke! you ought to be glad you got out," said the detective. "I was afraid you'd go to prison. Don't complain. We must make the best of the bad situation."

"Begorra," said Barney, "it's a long chase he do be afther givin' us, an' me a-thinkin' that we'd only have ter catch ther spalpeen on ther say whin he tuck ther forst shtainer."

"Gwine ter run us all de way roun' de worl'," growled Pomp, angrily. "Spec we won't catch him eben den."

They were all provoked, surprised and nettled over the persistence with which the rascal eluded them.

Several days passed by.

The Pegasus crossed Italy and Turkey, and going over the Mediterranean in the night the Pharos was sighted.

The flying machine sunk down over the ships in the harbor, and the search-light flashed down upon them.

All the crews were frightened.

Frank carefully examined every one of the ships until he found the one he wanted.

It was the Khedive.

Over her the air ship paused.

Down she sunk until she was close beside the steamer.

Barney did not let her sink into the water, but held her so that the two decks were flush with each other.

All the watch on the German steamer's deck had seen the air-ship come down.

They now crowded to the side, and staring at her in amazement, they began asking questions about her.

Frank satisfied their curiosity, and then asked them:

"When did your ship come in?"

"Yesterday," was the reply of the mate.

"Did you have a passenger named Murdock from Marseilles?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"We wish to see him on business."

"Describe the man."

Frank did so.

When he finished the mate said:

"We did have such a man aboard."

"Boarded you without baggage just as you left port?"

"Yes, that's the man, but he has gone of course."

"Do you know where?"

"To Jerusalem, in a boat for Jaffa."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, for our captain went with him."

Frank questioned the mate at some length further, and having thanked him for his information, he saw that a large number of boats were approaching.

The crews were curious about the strange air-ship.

Foreseeing that he would be pestered by them Frank went into the pilot-house, and raised the engine 500 feet.

She then sped away.

"We know where the villain has gone at any rate," said Frank, grimly. "By to-morrow we will reach the Dead Sea in Palestine, and meet the beggar in the Holy Land."

"He probably imagines he has escaped us now," said the detective, "although he must know that we mean to dog him if we have to go all around the world to catch him."

Barney and Pomp turned in.

The engine glided smoothly along and reaching the land she headed for the Jordan river.

By daybreak she reached Jerusalem.

Hovering over the ancient city, she excited the wonder of the entire population who rushed from the houses.

They were a strange mixture of Turks, Arabs and Egyptians and looked upon the Pegasus as something supernatural.

The air ship sunk down until she hovered over the house tops, and Frank went out on deck.

In a square below he observed several white men dressed like himself and among them a stout German in the blue uniform and brass buttons of a ship captain.

As soon as Frank's glance rested upon this man, he came to the conclusion that he was the captain of the Khedive.

To assure himself, he shouted in German:

"Hey, captain, we have just come from your steamer at Alexandria."

"You don't say so," replied the other in surprise.

Then he began asking the usual questions about the Pegasus, her object and so forth.

"The man we want is with you," said the inventor.

"Oh no," replied the captain. "He was with me."

"And where is he now?"

"Left him last night with a caravan bound for Bagdad."

"Thwarted again by thunder!" cried Frank, in disgust.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OASIS IN THE DESERT.

It was broiling hot when the engine of the clouds flew over the Syrian Desert toward the Dehanah Mountains.

There was scarcely a breath of air stirring, there came a dreadful glare from the sand, and a deep silence prevailed.

Pomp sent the machine high in the sky to avoid the smothering heat radiated by the ground.

The rest were at breakfast.

Far in the distance stood an oasis in the desert.

It consisted of a few rocks around a *wady*, or reservoir of spring water, several gaunt palms, a little grass, and a small number of dark green bushes.

The caravans of mules and camels usually march at night to avoid the heat, and rest by day in these oases, if any are found.

Pomp knew this.

He therefore concluded that the caravan they sought for might be there, and steered the Pegasus toward it.

As the machine drew nearer to it, he caught sight of several white tents pitched among the trees.

There now remained no doubt in his mind about the place being an encampment of the natives.

Indeed, a few moments afterward he discerned the figures of several camels lying on the ground in the shade.

There was a speaking tube in the room, and Pomp grasped it and shouted in the mouth piece:

"All han's on deck!"

"What's the matter?" Frank answered.

"Dar am a camp ahead ob us."

That was enough for the inventor. He came running out, followed by the others, and went up forward.

He quickly saw the oasis and its occupants.

"Very likely the very caravan we are in search of," he told his friends. "Pomp, lower the Pegasus."

"In de oasis?"

"Yes. We'll take them by surprise."

The engine settled down, but before she could reach the ground, the cries of the camels brought the natives from their huts, and they saw the air-ship.

A scene of excitement ensued.

The wildest cries escaped the natives, and they prostrated themselves upon the ground, touching the earth with their foreheads.

All of them looked like Arabs.

There were seven in the party, and every one men. Frightened by the air engine, the camels got upon their feet and plunged about the oasis in the wildest manner. Frank keenly eyed the Arabs. "All natives," he commented. "Mayn't Murdock be in a tini?" asked Barney. "I doubt it, but I'll see." "Can you speak to them?" asked Reynard. "Not in their tongue." Just then the air-ship alighted on four flanges and stood on the ground perfectly rigid near the Arabs. Frank alighted with Reynard. Going over to the three tents, he peered in. They were all empty. "He isn't here!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps he is in another caravan," suggested the detective. "More than likely, for he isn't in the oasis or we'd see him." "Let's go ahead then. These poor wretches are badly scared." "Very well," assented Frank, and they returned aboard. The Pegasus was sent skyward. When she had risen, the seven men arose. One of them burst out laughing and muttered: "What a narrow escape! But they failed to penetrate my disguise!" He was Murdock! For safety against the natives he had put on this disguise when he started to cross the desert with his six paid servants. It now stood him in good stead. Ignorant of the deception that had been practiced upon them the crew of the air engine arose to a height of 430 feet and the coon sent the machine ahead. Frank watched the people in the oasis with a glass and as they vanished astern in the distance, he said: "I was almost sure Murdock was among them. However, we must look further. It was disappointing." "Gwine straight ahead ter Bagdad?" asked Pomp. "Yes. We can run across him long before he reaches there. The caravans travel very slowly, going at a walk, while we can get along at the rate of a mile a minute." Barney was now posted on watch. The rest of the journey was finished by the afternoon but not another caravan was seen. Every one was surprised at this. It began to dawn upon Frank's mind that an error had been made somewhere. "Could it be possible that the captain of the steamer sent us on a wild goose chase?" he asked the Irishman. "Bedad, it looks as if we'd been fooled," replied Barney. "It would have been impossible for any caravan to have reached this place ahead of us." "Yer roight there, sor. Now, them spalpeens in the oasis——" "Are you suspicious about them?" "Faith, it shtrick me as Murdock might be wid 'em." "How could he have escaped detection?" "Be makin' himself luck loike ther resht av ther gang." "Sure enough." "Did you see anny av their mugs?" "No, for they kept their faces to the ground." "Begorra, that's where yer mishtake waz." Frank began to agree with this idea. He had been careless by trusting too much to outward appearances, and now deeply regretted it. "I'm going back to meet that caravan!" said he, finally. "Moight jest as well wait here, as they're bound ter come along." "Very well. There's a good place to wait." He pointed out a rocky gorge, and the engine descended. All travelers to Bagdad had to pass through it. They remained there until the following day, when the coon descried some camels approaching. In an hour the caravan reached them, and our friends saw that they were the very men they wanted. But there were only four in the party. Each man rode a camel. As they drew near the air-ship, Frank and his friends armed with rifles, confronted them. "Halt!" cried the inventor. The Arabs gave a shout of fear. At one glance they recognized the adventurers. Instantly the camels were stopped, and one of them yelled: "No shoot—no shoot!" "The rascal speaks English!" exclaimed Frank. "Me not got money," continued the Arab. "He takes us for bandits!" laughed the inventor. "Take camel; no kil us!" continued the native. "Dismount!" "Yes, yes!" cried the man, as he and his friends obeyed. "Where are your friends?" "Free—gone." "The white man?" "Yes, he gone." Here was an acknowledgment that there was a white man among them, as Barney had surmised. Frank was quick to notice it. He therefore asked: "Why did the white man dress like you?"

"'Fraid of de Bedouins." "Do you know his name?" "Mr. Martin, he say." "Martin, eh? He had a cut face, didn't he?" "One mark on de cheek dis shape," said the Arab, stretching open his first and second fingers in a V shape. "That's the man. Where has he gone?" "To Samara, or de Euphrates water near de ruins of Babylon." "Who did he have with him?" "Two of de mens. He 'fraid to come to Bagdad." "How came you to be with him?" "He pay. Me interpreter an' guide of Jerusalem." "Ah—I see. Now, where does he intend to go?" "Down de river to de Persian gulf." "If you are lying to me, I am coming back to kill you." "No, no! Me tell trufe." The man was so frightened that he really spoke the truth. Frank then allowed them to pass, and going aboard the Pegasus with his friends, they started her up. They now had evidence enough of the cunning of the man they were chasing, for he gave them the slip at every turn. "He seems to anticipate every move we make," said Frank, in thoughtful tones. "Now he will make better time on the water. As we don't know what boat he is in, and there may be scores of them on the river, it will be like hunting for a needle in a haystack to find him." The Pegasus ran to the southward. She finally reached the big river. There they lowered her to within a short distance of the surface of the water, and caused her to follow the course of the stream toward the gulf. She sped along, and a keen lookout was maintained for boats going down the stream. Toward midnight a vessel was seen in advance, and the Pegasus bore down upon it.

CHAPTER X.

BUYING A SHIP'S CREW.

As the air ship drew near the boat, a number of Persians were seen swarming over her deck. The Pegasus had created a profound sensation among them for they were wildly gesticulating, loudly talking and all at once began to discharge a number of rifles at her. A hail of bullets struck her. As the leaden pellets hummed over her deck, Frank and his companions rushed inside, and closed the windows. They headed their boat for the city of Bassorah a short distance down the stream, and kept up a steady fire at the Pegasus as they retreated before her. The discharge of fire arms alarmed the people in the city, and in a few moments the bank of the river was thronged with armed men. Many of them embarked in boats and put out to join the one after which the Pegasus was going. Seeing that there would be serious trouble if the engine remained where she was, Frank raised her. A tremendous shout arose from the Persians when they saw her fly up into the air. Many of them hastened back to the shore. "We can't do anything here!" exclaimed Frank. "Howly floy!" roared Barney. "Is it roonin' away yez are? Be heavens, it's as foine a ruction as iver I see yer chain' me out of, d'yer moind?" "There's no sense in fighting without an object in it." "Faix, is it no object ter break ther heads av thim fellies?" "Do you think our man was on that boat?" asked Reynard. "No. If he had been we would have seen him." "Golly, what a sensation dis yere air-ship make wif dem yaller face niggahs!" chuckled Pomp. Having risen to an altitude of five hundred feet, the engine plunged into a bank of fleecy white clouds, and the scene below vanished from view. Frank kept the Pegasus aloft until they had passed the city and then sent her down again. She ran down to the gulf without meeting another boat, but out on the broad sheet of water they descried a number of ships and steamers going in different directions. Frank viewed them with a telescope. As his glance roved over the water he suddenly caught sight of a moving figure. Riveting his attention intently upon it he suddenly cried: "By thunder, there's a man in the water." "Whar?" gasped Pomp, in startled tones. "Astern of that steamer to the southeast." "Surah 'nough! It am a man!" "Barney, steer for that steamer." "I will that," and off went the engine on another tack. When she drew close to the man she paused, and they saw that he was almost naked and clung to a broken plank. Down settled the Pegasus, and when she drew near the surface of the water, Frank shouted: "Ahoy there!" "A voice!" cried the man in the water, joyfully. "Catch this rope, and come aboard."

"Thank God, I'm saved!"

Frank dropped a rope ladder down.

As it fell near the man, he grasped it eagerly, and began to ascend to the deck of the engine of the clouds.

He was assisted aboard by the young inventor.

The man was evidently an American.

He wore only a pair of pants.

He had a smooth face, brown hair, sun-burned skin, and was evidently about forty years of age.

"Lord, ain't I glad!" he cried, delightedly.

"How did you get into the water?" asked Frank.

"A man flung me overboard from my ship."

"An attempted murder, eh?"

"That's just about the size of it, sir. But say—what is this?"

Frank explained about the Pegasus.

Then he said questioningly:

"What vessel are you from?"

"That steamer ahead there—the Rover."

"You haven't been long in the water then?"

"Oh, no. Only half an hour."

"Why did the man try to kill you?"

"I'll explain. My ship is a San Francisco trader. Her last stop was in the Euphrates. She was homeward bound to-night when a native boat came up behind her. I stood on the deck, aft. The first thing I knew a fellow looking like an Arab came up a rope at the stern, from the Persian boat. He gave me a thump that knocked me senseless. When I revived I saw that the man was a white man in disguise. He had on my clothes."

"Ha! Did he look like this?" interposed Frank quickly, and he gave the sailor a description of Murdock.

"Yes, that's a life-like picture of him!" said the man. "Well, before I could say a word to him he flung me overboard. The native boat had vanished. By good luck I had my senses and swam. A piece of plank was drifting near me and I seized it. The steamer went on. I yelled for help, but no one seemed to hear me. I was left to my fate until you just found me."

"So Martin Murdock is on that steamer, eh? Well, by all that's wonderful this is a good piece of news. I never expected to find him so easily."

"You seem to know the man."

"Listen, and I'll tell you his history."

Frank related all that had transpired.

It surprised the sailor.

When the inventor finished, he said:

"Ain't it queer that you should find me and get on his track again?"

"Very," assented Frank. "Now, I've got a plan to propose to you."

"What is it?" queried the sailor, curiously.

"I'll put you back aboard the Rover. You can tell your captain what happened. They will arrest the man. Then we will take charge of him. Will you do it?"

"Gladly. I want to get even with him badly."

"All right. Say, Barney, overhaul the steamer."

All the rest had overheard the sailor's story, and the Celt steered the engine after the steamer.

"I want to tell you something," said the rescued man, as they flew along in pursuit of the distant vessel.

"What is it?"

"The captain and crew of the Rover are a bad set."

"How do you mean?"

"If that fellow has got plenty money, and offers to bribe them to protect him, they will do so."

"That's bad! Why do you think he attacked you?"

"Probably to get my clothes for a disguise. But he will find it won't work, as he can't palm himself off for me. Besides I must admit that I gave him a little fight before he got the best of me, and his murderous attempt to take my life might have come from a fit of revenge."

"That's more than likely it, as he is very spiteful."

The engine was flying along swiftly and soon came up with the big steamer.

Frank left the rope ladder hanging down, and as the Pegasus paused above the steamer, the sailor went down and landed on the vessel's deck.

The watch had seen the air-ship, and their shouts aroused the people down below.

Every one was on deck when the sailor came down from the Pegasus and instantly surrounded him.

As soon as they heard his story several of them ran off in search of Martin Murdock.

When they found him, he was in company with the captain.

"Stand back, there!" the skipper cried to them.

"But—"

"Silence! See here!"

"Money!"

"Yes—one hundred dollars for every man who stands by him."

"That settles it. He remains unharmed, sir."

"You bet he will. Tell the rest of the crew."

The men hastened away to comply.

In a few minutes all the crew were apprised of the news, and the man Frank saved felt disgusted over the result.

Matters had terminated just as he feared, but he could not do anything unaided to help the aeronauts.

Murdock was exultant.

He discreetly remained below out of Frank's sight.

The young inventor became impatient when he found that nothing was done to produce the rascal.

"Ahoy!" he shouted down.

"What do you want?" yelled the captain.

"The man we sent for."

"You can't have him!"

"What! Are you befriending him?"

"Ay—ay! with our blood, if necessary!"

This answer startled Frank, for it gave him plainly to understand that Murdock had won the friendship of the ship's company.

"We will blow your craft to pieces with bombs!" he shouted angrily. "You will repent of your folly, captain."

"Bosh! We are armed and do not fear you!"

Frank withdrew from the rail and started for the deck house.

He had scarcely reached the door, however, when there sounded a report like a pistol shot down in the hold.

The next moment the helices began to slacken speed, and the Pegasus plunged down toward the water.

It was evident that some serious accident had happened.

CHAPTER XI.

IN A TIGER'S JAWS.

By the time the Pegasus dropped into the Persian Gulf the helices had stopped revolving, and the lights went out.

The report Frank heard in the hold clearly indicated that some accident happened that paralyzed all the mechanism.

He rushed into the deck-house and hastened down below.

The engine of the clouds floated buoyantly, but the steamer ran away from her rapidly.

The Rover was making fifteen knots an hour, and her crew gave a yell of delight when they realized that some accident had befallen the air-ship.

Now they expected to run away from the aerostat, and carry Martin Murdock to San Francisco without molestation.

That would be an easy way to earn the money he offered them to protect him.

In a few minutes the steamer was far away.

Frank lit a match in the hold, and soon found that the dynamo wheel had burst.

Its fragments littered the floor.

All the power of the Pegasus was paralyzed.

She could not move until the wheel was repaired, and as Frank saw that it would occupy considerable time to do the work, he foresaw the escape of the trading steamer.

It was then nine o'clock at night.

Tom Reynard came running in.

"Holy smoke, what a daisy accident!" he cried.

"They will escape us now," said Frank, regretfully.

"Never saw the beat of the way Murdock slips away from us."

"It can't be helped. The best thing we can do is to get to work and repair the damage at once. The sooner we fix the wheel, the quicker we can pursue the steamer."

Barney and Pomp were called down.

They worked like beavers all night long, and it was long after day-break before they had the wheel replaced by a new one, and the machinery put in order.

Pomp prepared breakfast, after partaking of which they took turns at sleeping.

Frank stood first watch.

He raised the Pegasus in the air.

The new dynamo wheel acted stiffly at first, but finally got into good working order, and the engine traveled properly again.

Keeping a constant look out for the steamer, the young inventor ran the engine down to the Arabian sea.

Barney relieved him of the wheel.

The Pegasus was headed for Ceylon.

Night fell upon the sea.

Nothing had been seen of the Rover yet.

Frank made a calculation after supper while in the cabin, and turning to the detective, he said:

"We ought to sight the steamer by this time."

"Do you think so?"

"According to the distance she traveled and that which we have made, she must be somewhere in this vicinity, off the coast of India."

"Knowing that we are in pursuit of her, the crew will very likely try to keep her concealed from us."

"Just what I expect."

"Then we might pass her."

"I'm afraid of that."

"To lose her would be a serious matter."

"Murdock might take to the shore. In that case we might never find him. I'm going ahead very slowly."

"Why are you keeping the Pegasus so close to the sea?"

"To avoid the possibility of missing the steamer if she's on the water."

Frank arose and went out on deck.

It was a clear, moonlit night, and every object below was plainly visible for a long way off.

Barney and Pomp were on duty.

At a short distance rose the coast of India.

Close under the lee Frank suddenly saw a dark, moving object and riveting his attention upon it intently he shouted:

"Barney, stop the Pegasus."
 "Yis, sor," replied the Celt, obeying.
 "I see a vessel without any lights."
 "Faith, an' that's more than I do."

"Look close to the shore there."
 A momentary silence followed.
 Then the Irishman saw the vessel.
 He turned the air-ship toward it and as they drew closer he suddenly directed the search-light upon the craft.
 A cry of delight now escaped Frank, for he recognized the steamer to be the Rover.

"That's her!" he cried.
 "Shure, they've hauled to."
 "Ain't they lowering a boat, Barney?"

"They are that, an' rowin' fer shore. Be ther powers, there's a man in ther boat wid thim sailors dressed in citizen's clothes, who, I'll take me out, must be Martin Murdock."
 "Can they be carrying him ashore to escape us in the jungles? It looks like it."

The quarter boat reached the shore.
 Passing through the surf, she was beached.
 The man alluded to sprang out and ran up on the sand, while the sailors got their boat afloat again.
 While they rowed back to the steamer, the man on the shore stood in plain view watching the Pegasus.
 The search-light was flashed upon him.
 He was thus given to understand that he was seen.
 Turning around, he rushed away into the bushes.
 Frank observed his action.
 "There he goes!" he cried.
 "Begorra, that must be Murdock!" said Barney.
 "Chase him!"

Away flew the engine toward the shore.
 The quarter boat returned to the steamer.
 When the Pegasus reached a point near the vessel, the signal gun on the Rover was suddenly discharged at her.
 It had been loaded with bullets, nails, and pieces of lead, and the scattering shot struck her.

She was too strong to suffer any injury from such small shot, however, and continued on her way unhurt.
 "I wonder if the man going ashore wasn't a scheme to draw us near, so they could fire at us?" muttered Frank.

"Masther Frank!" yelled Barney, "is it wid a shmoile yez will take thim shots, or shall we return thim wid our compliments?"
 "Fire a volley at the rascals!" replied the inventor.
 The coon, the Irishman and the detective, obeyed this order, by discharging their rifles at the sailors.

Several mournful howls were returned, showing that the bullets had hit their enemies.
 Passing on, the Pegasus left the steamer astern and reached the land where the fugitive vanished.
 He had gone into a jungle.
 It was half a mile in diameter and surrounded by clear ground upon all sides.

If the fugitive were to attempt to escape from it, the occupants of the flying machine would not fail to see him.
 Frank saw that it would be a difficult task to find the man in the night, so he said to his friends:

"I am going to keep the Pegasus poised above the jungle here until daybreak. In the meantime, if you will keep watch he can't get away without being seen."

The rest agreed with this plan.

At that time the engine of the clouds floated but 200 feet above the waving grass.

She was kept there.

A watch was posted.

Nothing occurred during the night to disturb our friends, and when daylight finally came they aroused themselves.

As Frank went out on deck he heard a deep, low moan like the rumbling of falling earth, in the jungle below.

It is by this plaintive sigh that the royal tiger makes his presence known, and in company with other animals of his species, he cat-er-wauls like a gigantic Tom cat.

When charging, his spring is accompanied by a series of rapid, frightful cough-like growls, and a single blow of his paw will break the back of an ox which he carries away as a cat carries off a mouse.

Frank had heard what terrible creatures the tigers of India were, and was not surprised when he heard a man yell furiously down in the jungle.

"There's a tiger after Murdock!" he shouted.

He saw the jungle agitated off to the right, and watching the spot closely, he saw a man running.

It was the same individual whom he had observed the night previously running into the cotton plants and boxwood bushes.

He ran for a deep nullah.

Directly behind him was a huge tiger in pursuit.

A wild cry of horror escaped the poor wretch as he glanced over his shoulder, and saw the fiery eyed monster rapidly overtaking him.

He fired a shot at the beast from his revolver, but before he could do so again, it sprang for him.

Through the air flew the graceful and beautiful body, and in an instant more it struck the man.

He was knocked down.

A terrible roar escaped the beast, as it landed on top of him, and opened its foaming mouth.

The terrible jaws crunched the man's bones, tore his flesh and as a wild despairing cry escaped him, the tiger absolutely ripped him to pieces!

CHAPTER XII.

LOSS OF A WHEEL.

FRANK had witnessed the terrible scene, and picking up a rifle, he aimed at the tiger.

The man had fallen into the nullah, and the brute was then lying across the remains of his mangled body.

Seeing that the unfortunate fellow had been killed, the young inventor did not hesitate to discharge his pneumatic rifle.

The explosive bullet pierced the animal's head.

It burst there, blowing its skull to pieces.

With the discharge the tiger bounded up into the air.

It landed ten feet away from its victim, and rolled over dead.

Every one rushed to Frank's side.

"What have you shot?" asked the detective.

"A tiger. The beast just killed Martin Murdock."

"Howly Heaven!" gasped Barney. "Our man—dead?"

"Torn to pieces."

"Fo' de Lawd!" gasped Pomp, in horror.

"See—there he lies on his face."

"Horrible! Horrible!" exclaimed Reynard.

"Faix, that inds our chase."

"I'se glad de rascal am dead for killin' dot po' boy."

"Send the Pegasus to the ground."

Pomp did so, and Frank alighted.

He strode over to the tiger, and saw that the animal's head had been shattered by the bomb-like bullet.

A few steps more brought him to the brute's victim.

His body was frightfully mutilated, and Frank stooped down and turned him over.

Casting a glance at the face, he staggered back.

An exclamation of intense astonishment escaped him, and seeing his three companions approaching he turned excitedly toward them, and said:

"This isn't Murdock!"

"It isn't?" cried Reynard in astonishment.

"No. It's the sailor we once rescued."

They all glanced at the man's face, and saw that Frank had told the truth about his identity.

For awhile a deep silence ensued.

Then they turned away from the sickening spectacle.

"Poor fellow!" said Frank. "His fate was not deserved."

"Wha' dey put him asho' in dis yere suit fo'?" asked Pomp.

"Probably to dupe us so they could get away," said the detective.

"Then," added Barney, "whoile we've been awaishin' ther hull noight here, thimimps av Satan have been sailin' away from us as fasht as they could put, be heavens!"

"No doubt it was a stratagem upon their part to divert us from them," said Frank. "But what pretext they gave the sailor for sending him ashore this way puzzles me."

"Warn't he berry friendly ter us?" asked Pomp.

"Grateful for saving his life. Maybe he showed the captain how well disposed he was toward us. That would have incited them against him."

"Arrah, then it's another chase we'll be afther havin' ter catch thim," regretfully said Barney. "Shure I thought as the murderer av little Joe Crosby had got his deserts. An' now, begob, he's livin' yet ter fool ther divil."

"We must not waste time now," said Frank. "Every minute is precious. While we are talking here the Rover is widening the breach between us. Let us go back to the engine of the clouds and—"

Whirr-rr-rrr!

A familiar, buzzing sound interrupted him.

It came from the direction of the Pegasus.

"The machine is ascending!" cried Frank.

He dashed forward at the top of his speed, and his companions ran after him.

By the time Frank reached the engine, she was ten feet in the air, her helices flying around swiftly.

It was impossible to touch her hull.

"Great Heaven! is she lost?" flashed across Frank's mind.

A terrible thrill of dismay passed over him as he glanced up at the ascending hull.

But just then he caught sight of the drag rope, and he rushed over to it and grasped it.

The next moment he ascending to the deck.

His friends were left behind.

Hastening up to the pilot house, Frank heard a terrific noise inside, and imagined that some man was in the place.

As he hastened in he saw that it was caused by an enormous orang-outang about four feet tall, of a brownish red color, and having extremely long arms.

The brute was evidently a denizen of the neighborhood, and having gone aboard had begun to play with the levers.

By this means the helices were started.

Getting one of its paws into the semi-circular handle of one of the levers, it could not withdraw it, and becoming panic-stricken, it began to struggle to release itself.

It showed its huge canine teeth to Frank threateningly as he entered, and uttered a fierce cry, while a most diabolical look crossed its projecting face.

"Heavens! An ape!" gasped the astonished inventor.

The brute renewed its fierce struggles.

Suddenly tearing itself free, it came at Frank on all four paws, and he retreated.

With an agile bound, the animal landed on top of him.

He had no weapons.

Flinging up his hands, he grasped the animal's hairy throat, but it used all its paws against him, and began to tear his clothes and scratch his skin.

They fell to the deck.

Here the struggle continued.

The brute made a desperate effort to bite Frank, but he succeeded in holding its ugly head back at arm's length.

It was wonderful the amount of energy, strength and perseverance the beast exhibited.

Their struggles carried them near the edge of the deck, and Frank suddenly arose, lifted the brute up, and exerting all his strength, he flung the animal away.

It shot out through the air and plunged earthward.

The Pegasus was then nearly a thousand feet above the earth, and the animal's fall proved fatal.

"Thank Heaven, I'm rid of him!" panted Frank.

He felt sore and exhausted.

But he ran into the turret.

Slackening the helices, he sent the machine to the ground again, and picked up his companions.

"Be heavens, it's rainin' moonkies!" cried Barney, as he went aboard. "Masther Frank, it's a quare place we're in. Shure a villain av a wan dhropped from ther clouds an' landed beside me so near, faith I thought he'd a hit me."

"I flung him from the Pegasus!" laughed the inventor.

He then told his friends what happened.

It astonished them considerably.

"If you hadn't caught the drag," said the detective, "the ape would have sent the engine so high up in the air she would never have come down again."

They then started the Pegasus for the island of Ceylon, and passing it, headed across the Indian Ocean.

A lookout was maintained for the fugitive steamer.

The day passed away, and as the sun was going down a most serious accident occurred to the engine.

Frank noticed a tremendous rattling sound at the end of the driving wheel shaft.

He made his way to the stern.

There he observed that the noise came from the smallest of the two screws at the extreme end.

The nut that held it on the shaft had worked loose.

Intending to stop the machinery and tighten the nut Frank was just about to walk away to get a wrench when there sounded a harsh, grating noise.

The wheel suddenly flew off the shaft.

Spinning around and around it dropped down into the sea into which it sunk and disappeared.

A cry of vexation escaped Frank.

He did not have another wheel on board and had no means of getting another.

The effect was soon felt.

The engine could now make no more than fifteen miles an hour against the ordinary wind.

She was crippled.

Her only reliance for speed was to go with a strong breeze when she could add a few miles.

All Frank's friends rushed aft.

They saw at once what had happened, and their expressions of dismay were without number.

"Now how can we hope to overtake the Rover if we meet her?" blankly asked Frank. "She can travel faster than we can, under favorable conditions."

"Bedad, she can't bate us badly, anyhow," said Barney. "Should we see her, it will be a case av nip an' tuck."

"Dar's a sail now," said Pomp, pointing northward.

It was a distant speck miles away, near the coast and Frank passed into the turret to get a glass.

He leveled it at the vessel.

"It's the Rover. I know her shape!" said he.

"Be heavens, I'll folly her if I have ter shlape at ther wheel!" said Barney. "We'll niver lose thrack av her now."

"Our only hope of capturing Murdock is to keep her in view," said Frank, grimly.

"It shall be done!" the detective declared.

And Pomp was equally as determined about the matter.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOMB SHELL.

"RAISE the Pegasus, quick!"

"Great heaven, Reade, what is this?"

"A cyclone. Look out for those rocks, Reynard!"

"Do you know what the land is below us?"

"The island of Borneo I am sure."

"Then that's the China Sea to the northward."

"Yes. There! The steamer is lost in the gloom! We may lose all trace of the Rover now."

Zizzi came the wind in a wild shriek as the air-ship flew upward into the dark vault of heaven.

But the great cliffs were dangerously close and as the wind caught the engine it hurled her along with terrific force and she struck the rocks.

Crash—bang!

The shock was terrific.

It shook her like an aspen.

She glanced along the cliff, tore off huge particles, and they went thundering down into the heavy seas that were dashing up in foamy billows at the bases of the precipices lining the coast.

A terrible black pall surrounded the engine and obscured everything so that the detective could not see a yard ahead.

The fierce wind was whirling in circles.

It swept the Pegasus far over the land.

Here her battle with the elements continued, and she was dashed up and down and all around furiously.

A week had passed.

During all that time she had been steadily chasing the steamship without gaining a mile on her in consequence of the loss of one of her diving wheels.

Barney remained on deck bound to the railing, Pomp was down in the engine room, and Frank stood at the wheel with Reynard.

Along they were driven, and the coon suddenly yelled up through a speaking tube:

"De oil engine jest broke heah!"

"Can't we get any current?" replied Frank.

"No, sah—no, sah! Slacken de helices, quick!"

Frank jerked one of the levers over, and down they settled toward the ground.

The search-light had been started, but as the oil engine now failed to operate the dynamo, the lights went out.

It was risky to descend in the gloom of that awful tempest, not knowing where they were going to alight.

But they had to go down.

In a few moments a tremendous crashing was heard, the engine swayed back and forth, and Barney roared:

"We're goin' among ther threes, bedad!"

"Can't stop her now!" replied Reynard.

"Oh, may ther saints persarve us!"

The crackling of branches continued, as she continued to go down, and then there came a heavy shock.

She had landed on her side.

Everybody was knocked down.

As soon as they were assured that she was safely on the ground, they forgot their bumps and bruises, crept out and all hands left the machine.

They only had a lantern, but its dim light showed them that they had fallen into a forest of ironwood, gutta percha, camphor and other trees.

The marshes were alive with elephants and rhinoceros, the woods swarmed with leopards, babyroussas and monkeys, while bears roamed the rocky sections and buffaloes the valleys.

Birds of paradise, flamingoes, swallows that built edible nests, peacocks and various other birds abounded in vast numbers; every bird, beast and reptile filled with fear of the storm.

Their cries all around the fallen engine raised a fearful din.

"The hull and flying apparatus is intact," said Frank, when he had finished his inspection.

"Do you think she is safe for the present?" the detective asked.

"We can't get her out in this storm."

"Bettah turn in den," Pomp suggested.

An examination of the oil engine was made, when it was found that the shaft of the fly-wheel had snapped in two.

It could easily be repaired.

So they turned in.

By the following morning the storm had gone.

Pomp prepared breakfast, but they had scarcely partaken of it when the voices of men were heard outside.

"Natives!" said Frank, listening to their talk.

"Savages?" asked the detective, quickly.

"The Malays and Dyaks are the worst kind. They subsist chiefly by hunting, fishing and piracy, are partly Mohammedans and partly heathen, and are cruel, crafty and wild," said the inventor.

Frank went out on deck.

Glancing down, he saw an army of the natives around the engine, loudly talking and gesticulating toward her.

They were Papis, yellowish colored, well-formed fellows, carrying poisoned spears and arrows, and knotted clubs, with which they beat out the brains of their prisoners.

These people lived in the deepest woods and solitudes, in caves and upon trees, naked, uncivilized, and separate from the rest of mankind.

They knew nothing of the sultans, rajahs and penjerans who governed the more civilized of the people of Borneo.

No sooner had they seen Frank when a score of weapons were sent flying at him, a single scratch from any of which would have sufficed to poison him to death.

He quickly withdrew within the cabin and locked the door.

"Hostile as I feared!" he commented.

"I hear them mounting the boat," said Reynard anxiously.

"Yes. They will get into the turrets now."

"Can't we drive them away with our weapons?"

"Yes, but it would amount simply to wanton slaughter as they have actually done us no harm yet, and cannot fight us on a fair basis, protected as we are by these walls. I have a plan to electrify the boat. See if you can turn the dynamo fly wheel a few minutes."

While they were doing this, Frank turned the current into the deck of the engine, and a chorus of yells escaped the natives as their bare feet received the current.

It caused them to hastily leave the machine.

In the meantime, Frank and Barney procured a new shaft for the oil-engine, and set it in place.

Several hours were required to get the engine in good condition, but they finally accomplished it.

The natives had retreated.

They then opened fire upon the machine.

Of course their weapons were simply wasted against the metal hull of the Pegasus, but they kept up the fusillade.

It was necessary for somebody to go to the pilot-house to cause the Pegasus to ascend, but a trip there from the deck-house was now highly dangerous.

Any of the poisoned missiles were apt to hit the one who attempted to venture it and kill him.

Yet it would not do to remain where they were too long, or they might just as well abandon all hope of trying to ever find the steamer again.

Frank became desperate.

He did not wish to injure the savages, but saw that only by the most desperate measure could he hope to get the engine up into the air again.

Accordingly he went down to the ammunition room.

There he loaded a bombshell with a high explosive powder, attached an electric wire to it, and secured the other end of the wire to one pole of the dynamo.

"I'll scare them away temporarily!" he said to his friends, "so when I give the word, complete the circuit in the wire."

"Shure I'll attind to that," volunteered Barney.

Frank opened the door, and hurled the shell out.

It rolled down a declivity to a safe distance from the Pegasus, and Frank shouted:

"Now, Barney!"

These words had barely left his lips when a score or more of the natives rushed up to the bomb to seize it.

At the same juncture Barney obeyed Frank's orders.

"Wait!" shrieked the young inventor.

His warning came too late, however, for the electric current flashed into the wire.

There sounded an explosion that roared like a battery of artillery, the burst shell blew every man to pieces who surrounded it, and encompassed in a cloud of dirt, they rose in the air, torn to fragments.

It was an awful warning to the rest, for they fled, yelling, in all directions, and Frank took advantage of their panic to rush up to the turret.

Shutting himself in, he started the helices whirling.

The Pegasus straightened up and rose.

She forced her way skyward through the opening she had first made among the trees, and quickly mounted to the clouds.

Here she sped away to sea.

Then she continued on over the course traversed by most ships bound for the United States.

Several days passed uneventfully by, when one morning a yell came from Pomp in the turret that startled every one.

"Dar's de Rover! Dar's de Rover—a wreck!"

His companions rushed out on deck and peered down.

Floating on the ocean below was the dismantled wreck of the trading steamer, and a man stood on her deck wildly signaling to the crew of the engine of the clouds.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

It was very evident that the steamer had fallen victim to the fury of the cyclone, so deplorable was her condition.

Frank studied her a few moments, then cried to Pomp:

"Go down to her; we will see what the man wants."

"Yassah," replied the coon, causing the engine to descend.

As the Pegasus paused beside the steamer, the man rushed over to her side, and he saw that he was a sailor.

"For God's sake, take me off," he implored. "The steamer has sprung a leak and may founder at any moment!"

"All right, come aboard!" said Frank, generously.

"You've got a good heart!" the man exclaimed, as he boarded the engine. "I'm sorry I ever raised a hand against you!"

"Where are your companions?" asked the inventor.

"All were taken aboard of a ship bound for Hong Kong. I was left to my fate in the hold. The cyclone ruined the ship."

"Was Martin Murdock with them?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sailor.

The engine was then raised in the air and headed for China.

Frank questioned the man and learned the details of their fight with the storm and abandonment of the Rover.

The air-ship was then headed for Hong Kong.

She arrived there in due time and descended on the suburbs.

Frank and the sailor alighted and going to the city they sought the American consul.

He told them that the ship wrecked crew had reached the city in safety and all had been shipped for California on the Pacific Mail steamer Confucius Kao two days previously.

Frank was chagrined to learn that Murdock was among them.

He left the sailor to find a berth and returned to where he had left the Pegasus.

The air-ship was surrounded by an excited crowd of Chinamen, all of whom seemed determined to board her.

Frank's companions had resented this intrusion, but as the celestials were persistent they produced their weapons.

Upon catching view of the rifles the Chinamen became very much excited, and produced knives and pistols.

They brandished the blades, and opened fire upon the occupants of the air engine with extreme insolence.

The whole gang were a lawless set of highbinders, whose main object was robbery, and Frank's friends suspected it.

They therefore did not hesitate to fire back at them.

Driven back by the shots, the Chinese scattered and ran.

Some of them now saw Frank, and imagining that he was one of the crew of the Pegasus, they ran for him.

Had it not been for Barney and Pomp, he would have been killed, as he was totally unarmed.

The valiant Celt and coon shot out among the wretches as they charged on the young inventor.

Several of the yelling horde fell wounded.

A way was opened for Frank to the Pegasus, and he ran for her, and reached her side in safety.

Hastening aboard, he put her helices in motion and she shot up into the air.

A howl of rage escaped the Chinamen to see her thus escaping, and they discharged a harmless volley after her!

Up she flew to the clouds, then off she went for the sea.

Frank's friends joined him, and he explained what he learned.

"We must chase the Confucius across the Pacific," said he; "she is bound for San Francisco."

"Holy smoke! What a daisy run," groaned Reynard.

"It's back home Murdock bes goin'," said Barney.

"How yo' 'spects ter catch dat yere steamah?" Pomp asked.

"Why, by ascending into the Solar Current!" said Frank. "Crippled as we are, we could not overhaul her. But that air current will add ten miles an hour to our speed."

"Go up by all means then!" exclaimed the detective.

Frank nodded, and sent the machine up several miles when they entered the great current and sped along faster.

From their great elevation the voyagers could see the ships they encountered by means of their telescopes, but failed to observe any until they neared the American shores, that tallied with the appearance of the Pacific mail steamers.

Frank made a computation of the time made, and was delighted to find that they had gained considerably on the Confucius Kao.

"Allowing eighteen knots an hour for her speed," said he to his friends, "we ought to reach the Golden Gate almost as soon as she does."

San Francisco came in view.

Here they espied the steamer at anchor.

She had beaten them in!

It was the final disappointment.

Sure that Murdock had once more escaped them, they lowered the engine of the clouds, and Frank and the detective alighted.

Inquiries soon developed the fact that the fugitive had only paused on shore long enough to procure some new clothing.

He had then taken passage on the Union Pacific railroad for the East, having purchased a ticket through to Chicago.

Learning what train he was on, and the time it was due in the White City, our friends hastened back to the flying machine, and resumed the pursuit relentlessly.

Murdock had six hours, or over two hundred miles start of them.

Away shot the Pegasus over the continent.

By cutting across curves, and resorting to similar measures, our friends reduced the lead of the train.

In two days they reached Chicago.

They were ahead of the cars.

A quick descent was made.

Frank and Reynard left the Pegasus and hastened to the depot, where they arrived just as the train came in.

Both were intensely excited.

"We must not miss him now," said the inventor. "We have gone all around the world after that man, and it would be terrible if we were to lose him at the last moment."

"He won't get away now," grimly asserted the detective.

"Here come the passengers. Keep your eyes open."

They stood aside as the people came thronging from the cars, and watched every one closely.

Suddenly Frank drew a revolver.

"There he is!" he muttered.

The next moment he had jumped in front of Murdock, taking him by surprise, and aimed his pistol at the man's head.

"You are my prisoner, sir!" he cried.

"Caught, by Heavens!" gasped the fugitive, turning pale.

"Hands up, or you are a dead man!"

"Don't fire! I surrender."

Up went Murdock's hands, and Reynard handcuffed him.

Some people tried to interfere, but a warrant for the rascal's arrest was shown, and they took him away.

Just as they were about to leave the depot, Barney and Pomp came rushing up to them, pale and excited.

"Master Frank!" gasped the Irishman. "Ther Pegasus is gone!"

"Gone!" echoed the inventor in startled tones.

"Blowed up—smashed into a thousand pieces!"

"Good heavens! How did it happen?"

"Yer see, ther naygur an' I left her a few moments afther you wint, an' there suddenly sounded a terrible explosion insoide av her. Ther next moment she wuz a wreck."

"What caused the explosion?"

"A can av that terrible powder, I'm thinkin', wid which you do be afther loadin' ther bullets we used in ther guns. It shstood on the edge av a shelf, an' must have fell to ther flure."

As there was no means of ascertaining positively what caused the explosion, and Barney's idea was the most plausible, Frank was forced to accept this theory.

He was, in fact, right in his conclusion.

They returned to where they had left the machine, and found a big crowd on the scene, attracted there by the violent report.

As the engine of the clouds was completely destroyed, they could do nothing with the remains, and therefore left them.

They reached the city with their prisoner, and put him in jail.

But a startling surprise awaited them.

The chief of police came in with little Joe Crosby, alive and well.

[THE END.]

In answer to their startled inquiries about him, they were told that Martin Murdock's bullet had failed to do its murderous work.

The boy had fallen wounded and senseless.

When Frank carried the detective into his house, a resident of Readestown had come along in a carriage, saw the boy and took him into the vehicle.

Carrying him home and summoning a doctor, he had maintained secrecy about the matter, and had the little fellow completely cured.

Long after Frank had gone in pursuit of Murdock, he had taken the boy back to Chicago, and put his case into the hands of the police.

There Joe had been ever since.

If he had perished, Murdock would have been hung; as it was, the villain was forced to make restitution, a new guardian was appointed for the boy, and he prospered after that.

Martin Murdock was sentenced to prison for his rascality.

Tom Reynard returned to his official duties pleased at the way the affair had terminated, and Frank, Barney and Pomp went home.

They had their long chase around the world for nothing, but did not regret it, as the perilous adventures they encountered just suited them.

The loss of the Pegasus incited Frank to invent another machine, and it was ultimately built, and proved to be a means of bringing him and his friends into the most exciting adventures.

In a future number of this library, we will give our readers an account of them, and so, for the present, will part with our friends.

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